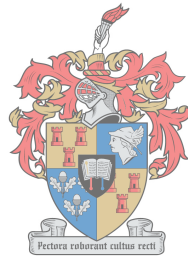


# Setting Art Apart: Inside and Outside the South African National Gallery (1895-2016)

Qanita Lilla



UNIVERSITEIT  
iYUNIVESITHI  
STELLENBOSCH  
UNIVERSITY



Dissertation presented for the degree of Visual  
Arts, at the Stellenbosch University.

Supervisor: Prof. Elizabeth Gunter

Co-Supervisor: Dr. Andrea Meyer

March 2018

## **Declaration**

I declare that the entirety of the work contained herein, is my own original work. I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights. I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Qanita Lilla

## Abstract

*Setting Art Apart* explores practices of exclusion and erasure in the white art world in South Africa. It looks at how art and art spaces, such as the art museum and the art academy were part of a project of reinforcing difference. The South African National Gallery in Cape Town is the historical reference of the study. The time frame spans the colonial beginnings of the museum through apartheid to the democratic present. After a long period of bureaucratic uncertainty the South African National Gallery was opened in 1930 as a monument to white art and culture. Excluding those who did not belong was part of the process of white self-affirmation. State art museums served to make black people invisible by portraying them as marginal while denying their art. Furthermore, the art museum played a role in the way powerful white constituencies imagined themselves. There are two prevailing elements that I have found useful to examine in the project: the manipulation of space and the changing position of the excluded black individual. Space is what was imagined, defined and controlled by the South African National Gallery. The museum shaped itself into a field of contention during the colonial period, physically setting art apart in the racially heterogeneous city of Cape Town. The museum differentiated itself from private spaces during apartheid by aligning itself with the sanitization and reconfiguration of the city. The black individual had a fraught and traumatic relationship with the white art world. At once omnipresent and invisible, black people did the manual labor and kept the museum space pristine but their presence was scarcely recognized. In this thesis I consider numerous instances of the erasure of black subjectivity including the way black female models were studied as generic black bodies in drawing classes at Rhodes University and were barely considered human. After apartheid, at the South African National Gallery, the art made by black women was made hyper-visible and the women themselves were objectified while the legacy of apartheid endured. In order to investigate practices inside the museum, I use traditional methods of archival research and look at exhibition catalogues, annual reports, newspaper reports and associated publications to track what was included. However, looking at what was erased and excluded exceeds the bounds of traditional methodologies, especially since archives were formed through colonial and apartheid enterprise. In order to engage with the apartheid archive while seeking to examine what is on the outside I position myself in the argument. As researcher, as a woman of colour and as a subject excluded from the white art world I insert my personal voice and experience in order to open up a space closed off to people of colour. *Setting Art Apart* is a project about a public institution that was never truly public and by inserting my own voice I engage subjectively with marginalization and exclusion.

## Acknowledgements

This project has had a convoluted journey, reaching its conclusion would not have been possible without the kindness and patience of numerous people. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Elizabeth Gunter at Stellenbosch University who offered me support, encouragement and good humour throughout this project. Thank you to my co-supervisor Dr. Andrea Meyer at Technische Universität, Berlin, who showed immense enthusiasm for this project and who added valuable insight despite our physical distance.

Words cannot convey my thanks for the support I have received from my family. My husband Ross Campbell has always believed that this was something I needed to do. He never once doubted my abilities, taking on more than his fair share and enduring this intense period with great fortitude and tenderness. To my beautiful children Hamza and Bilal, three years seemed like a very long time but you'll both be happy that I can finally emerge out from under 'the book'. Thank you to my incredible sister, Ibtisaam Lilla for her generosity as well as her invaluable help across academic/family life, for her help with archival citations, IT support and with countless meals and childcare. Thank you to my mother, Nazley Lilla, who believed that my voice had to be heard and my story told. I only truly felt that this project was worthwhile when I saw the excitement and recognition in her eyes. My father, Abdulrahman Lilla, who survived because of education and who passed on the yearning and passion to me.

To my dear friends who have shown me such love and generosity. I am blessed to count you as kindred spirits. Kylie Thomas who is compassionate, caring and ambitious, who generously shared so much of her knowledge with me. Mary Coombes who has come a long way from Rhodes, who survived art school stronger and wiser. Thank you for kindly allowing me to include your beautiful drawings. Carole Thompson who believed that there was life beyond the trenches of Doha. I thank you all deeply.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) for the financial support over the period of the study.



## Table of Contents

List of Figures	IX
-----------------	----

### INTRODUCTION

Background and context	2
Theoretical framework	4
Chapter outline	6
Race	11
Premise	14

### CHAPTER ONE

#### *Setting Art Apart*

1.1 Introduction	16
1.2 South African National Gallery	17
1.3 Doing theory	20
1.4 Visual culture and the postcolonial	26
1.5 Postcolonialism and the subaltern subject	29
1.6 Postcolonial Theory	33
1.7 Decolonial Thinking	34
1.8 The subaltern and border thinking	35
1.9 Syntheses: Whiteness and the construction of national identity	39
1.10 Conclusion	42

### CHAPTER TWO

#### *Shaping a Field of Contention at the South African National Gallery (1895–1947)*

2.1 Introduction	44
2.2 Origins and Background of a Colonial Art Museum (1895)	47
2.3 Classical Casts for the Colony (1908)	48

2.4 The Aesthetics of Union and the South African National Gallery Opens (1910 to 1930)	52
2.5 Conservative rhetoric in the Cape Town art world (1940–1947)	57
2.6 The Art Sales and the Commission of Enquiry (1944–1947)	62
2.7 The Modern art debate revisited (1947)	68
2.8 Good, Decent, and Uplifting: The Bailey Collection (1947)	70
2.9 Conclusion	72

### CHAPTER THREE

#### *The power of public and private spaces: Remapping the city and the South African National Gallery (1949-1970's)*

3.1 Introduction	74
3.2 Eliding blackness: The South African National Gallery (1950's)	76
3.3 John Paris (1949-1963)	78
3.4 Displaying whiteness: temporary and permanent exhibitions (1950's-1960's)	79
3.5 Founder Nations (1958)	83
3.6 Forced removals and white collusion: Cape liberalism and early apartheid (1950's-1960's)	87
3.7 The last days of District Six (1970's)	92
3.8 The District Six Museum	93
3.9 Forced removals and looking at family photographs	101
3.10 Re-mapping Cape Town and the District Six Museum	107
3.11 Conclusion	108

### CHAPTER FOUR

#### *Inside and outside a divided white art world (1980's)*

4.1 Introduction: Cultural institutions and the state (1980's)	111
4.2 PW Botha's politics and Separate Amenities (1980's)	117

4.3 Circumventing state censorship at the South African National Gallery (1979)	121
4.4 The state of art in South Africa conference (1979)	124
4.5 South African Artists Association (SAAA)	131
4.6 The Cape Town Triennial and the Culture and Resistance Arts Festival Gaborone, Botswana (1982)	134
4.6.1 Inside the white art world: The Cape Town Triennial (1982)	134
4.6.2 Outside the white art world: The Culture and Resistance Symposium and Festival of the Arts, Gaborone (1982)	138
4.7 Thami Mnyele: artist, activist	139
4.8 Apartheid intervention and Operation Plecksy (1985)	144
4.9 People's art and the state	146
4.10 Cultural boycotts (1981)	148
4.11 Valparaiso Biennale Chile and exhibitions of 'good will' (1986)	148
4.12 South African Artists respond to Valparaiso (1987)	150
4.13 The Esmeralda and El Rostro de Chile (The face of Chile) Pretoria exhibition (1985)	152
4.14 Arts funding: Foundation for the Creative Arts (1989)	155
4.15 Conclusion	156

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *The black body imagined in a white art world (1990's)*

5.1 Introduction: Life drawing and art instruction at Rhodes University	158
5.2 The art history syllabus	163
5.3 The black model in the white art studio	167
5.4 Encountering the black female body and playing at having a white eye	171
5.5 Apartheid and the black body	175
5.6 The black body and the pursuit of knowledge	177
5.7 Invisibility and silence on the fringes	181
5.8 Unknown and isolated: black experiences in academia and the white art world	186

5.9	Appropriating the European life class: Los Angeles, USA	190
5.10	The art school, university and art museum	195
5.11	Black women in the museum	196
5.12	Conclusion	202

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Rebranding the South African National Gallery: Appropriating Africa and the black body (1990-2000's)*

6.1	Introduction: Redress and dressing the house of art	205
6.2	Visiting the museum (1992)	206
6.3	Visiting the museum (2016)	208
6.4	The 1990's political context	210
6.5	Rebranding the South African National Gallery	212
6.6	Marilyn Martin's strategies	216
6.7	The Foundation of Arts (1989)	218
6.8	Quantifiable gains	221
6.9	Lack of interference	222
6.10	Rapid and expanded acquisitions (1990-1993)	223
6.11	Rebranding	225
6.12	Contradiction and redress	227
6.13	Changing the image of the museum	228
6.14	Rebranding, shape-shifting	231
6.15	Redecorating the museum	233
6.16	Two exhibitions: Ezakwantu: beadwork from the Eastern Cape (1993) and IGugu LamaNdebele: Pride of the Ndebele (1994)	236
6.17	Carol Kaufmann interview (2016)	243
6.18	A new logo	245
6.19	The same storytellers spinning new tales	247
6.20	Conclusion	256

## CONCLUDING CHAPTER

*Curating difference at the South African National Gallery and student activism in Cape Town (2010-2016)*

7.1	Introduction	260
7.2	The exhibition Pierneef to Gugulective (1910-2010)	263
7.3	'Whiteness burning' Shackville Protests (2016)	271
7.4	Rhodes Must Fall (2015)	274
7.5	The Trans Collective	276
7.6	Conclusion	280
	Bibliography	281

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Andrew Lamprecht, Ed Young and Bruce Gordon, 2002.	8
Figure 2: Rhodes art school <i>Mary Coombes and me</i> , 1993.	15
Figure 3: <i>Company Gardens and the South African National Gallery</i> , 1930.	16
Figure 4: <i>View of the South African National Gallery</i> , 1950.	18
Figure 5: <i>Nongqawuse and Nonkosi</i> , 1858.	23
Figure 6: <i>Two unnamed men hold up paintings to the Board of Trustees at the South African National Gallery</i> , 1948.	28
Figure 7: <i>South African National Gallery</i> , 1960.	31
Figure 8: <i>A child looks at a portrait of the two English princesses, Princess Margaret and Princess Elizabeth</i> . South African National Gallery, 1938.	38
Figure 9: <i>The South African National Gallery</i> , 2014.	44
Figure 10: <i>Interior door of the South African National Gallery showing a cast from the Beit Collection</i> . 1930.	52
Figure 11: <i>The South African National Gallery</i> , Cape Town, South Africa, c. 1930.	55
Figure 12: <i>The gardens of the South African National Gallery</i> , 1930.	55
Figure 13: <i>Art sale from the South African National Gallery</i> , 1947.	61
Figure 14: <i>Art sale from the South African National Gallery</i> , 1947.	65
Figure 15: <i>Collection of Alfred Beit</i> , The South African National Gallery, 1953.	74
Figure 16: <i>Governor General of Union, opening the Robinson Collection of painting, Princess Labia sits beside him</i> , 1959.	80
Figure 17: <i>South African National Gallery and the Dutch art exhibition</i> , 1953.	81
Figure 18: <i>Colour chart illustrating layout of permanent collections in 1958, Guidebook to the permanent collection</i> , 1958.	83
Figure 19: <i>The atrium at the South African National Gallery</i> , c1960.	87
Figure 20: Jansje Wissema, <i>Last days of District Six</i> . c.1970's.	92
Figure 21: <i>The District Six Museum crew based at the Moravian Church District Six</i> . Seen from the right are Menisha Collins, Tina Smith, Vivian Lalu and me, 2000.	94
Figure 22: <i>Nazley Jeppie in Harfield, Claremont</i> , 1962.	96
Figure 23: <i>Christmas family photograph taken in Cape Town, during Harfield days</i> . On the photograph appear Nazley, Braim, and Phaldie Jeppie, c.1960's.	97

Figure 24: <i>The District Six Museum, Peggy Delport and me</i> , 2000.	98
Figure 25: <i>My grandmother Aysie Jeppie, with Girlie, Braim, and baby Shamil in Surrey Street, Harfield Village, Claremont, c.1960's.</i>	102
Figure 26: Jansje Wissema, <i>Interior</i> , District Six. 1970's.	103
Figure 27: Achmat Dangor's grandmothers house in Fordsburg, <i>Johannesburg</i> . 1950.	105
Figure 28: Jansje Wissema, <i>Interior</i> , District Six. 1970's.	106
Figure 29: <i>David Goldblatt, Senior Members of National Party at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary</i> . 1964.	110
Figure 30: Paul Stopforth, Biko Series (originally <i>Untitled</i> , briefly changed to <i>We Do It</i> , then <i>Requiem for Allende I</i> in 1980). 1980.	126
Figure 31: Paul Stopforth, Biko Series (originally <i>Untitled</i> , briefly changed to <i>Steve Biko</i> then <i>Requiem for Allende II</i> ). 1980.	116
Figure 32: Paul Stopforth, <i>The interrogators</i> . 1979.	121
Figure 33: Medu Art Ensemble (Accredited to Thami Myele) <i>You Have Struck a Rock</i> . 1982.	134
Figure 34: Thami Mnye, <i>Untitled</i> . 1982. Poster for the Culture and Resistance festival organised by Medu Art Ensemble, Gaborone, Botswana.	138
Figure 35: Thami Myele, <i>There goes a man, sad and deep in sorrow like a river underground</i> . 1972.	141
Figure 36: <i>On board the Esmeralda in Table Bay, Cape Town</i> . 1985.	152
Figure 37: <i>The Esmeralda in Table Bay</i> . 1985.	153
Figure 38: Mary Coombes, <i>Thandeka</i> . 1993.	158
Figure 39: Mary Coombes, <i>Miriam</i> . 1993.	161
Figure 40: Mary Coombes, <i>Roman General Plaster Cast</i> . 1993.	163
Figure 41: Mary Coombes, <i>Thandeka</i> . 1993.	167
Figure 42: Mary Coombes, <i>Elgin Marbles Plaster Cast</i> . 1993.	171
Figure 43: Mary Coombes, <i>Miriam</i> . 1993.	175
Figure 44: <i>Eugen Fischer looking at Rehoboth Baster photographs</i> , 1938.	177
Figure 45: <i>George Stanley sculpture class</i> . Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, California, 1920's.	190
Figure 46: Tracy Rose, <i>The Kiss</i> . 2001.	198
Figure 47: Berni Searle, <i>Looking back from the Colour Me series</i> . 1999.	202

Figure 48: Isa Kabini, <i>mural in front niche of The South African National Gallery</i> , 1994.	204
Figure 49: <i>Dolce and Gabbana Spring Collection abaya range 2016</i> .	230
Figure 50: <i>Portrait of Nelson Mandela wearing beadwork</i> , from Ezakwantu: beadwork from the Eastern Cape, 1993.	236
Figure 51: <i>Ezakwantu: beadwork from the Eastern Cape, glass display cases</i> , 1993.	239
Figure 52: Nameless 'Invited Artists' at the opening of the exhibition <i>IGugu lamawdebele</i> (Pride of the Ndebele) 1996.	240
Figure 53: <i>The South African National Gallery's Logo for the Bonani newsletter</i> , c.1990.	245
Figure 54: <i>The South African National Gallery with Logo c.1990</i> .	246
Figure 56: <i>Pierneef to Gugulective (1910-2010)</i> . 2010.	260
Figure 57: Ashleigh Furlong, <i>Shackville Protest burning art at UCT</i> . 2016.	262
Figure 58: <i>Rhodes Must Fall protest action</i> , UCT, 2015.	274
Figure 59: <i>Members of The Trans Collective at the Centre for African Studies, UCT</i> , 2016.	276
Figure 60: Ashraf Hendricks, <i>Paul Weinberg of the Centre for African Studies Gallery and HeJin Kim of the Trans Collective</i> , 2016.	277
Figure 61: Transform UCT grew out of the <i>Rhodes Must Fall</i> Movement (Monday Newspaper). 2016.	279



## **Star**

I have at my centre  
a voice

the sounds  
sharp points  
shooting  
outward  
gather speed  
and are lost

The arrows of my voice  
Are lost in the darkness  
The silence  
Of my birthplace

I grow  
My silent centre grows

Sharply  
I break the blackness  
And shower  
The glowing splinters down

The slow  
Becoming  
Of my silence  
To the size  
and fury  
Of the sun's

(Jennifer Davids, 1974)

## Introduction

### Background and context

The poet Jennifer Davids, a woman of colour, grew up in Cape Town in a Group Area on the Cape Flats during the turbulent years of apartheid (Kgalane, 1996:36). The poem *Star* articulates Davids' position as a poet, of the difficulty of finding her voice but of the impossibility of remaining silent. *Star* is about breaking the silence imposed by an oppressive political regime but it is also about how the journey is deeply personal. Davids writes short sparse lines to articulate the domineering quality of silence. Silence is what surrounds her words, although it never entirely overtakes them because she has made her mark, however small. Davids works to pierce and shatter the emptiness. She recognises the restrictions of her environment but bravely finds a way to overcome it. Her fury helps her to direct and focus her voice. At first, it is not easy working with an impetuous, uncontrolled and immature voice that is lost in the desolation of the environment. Davids is persistent and her work to shape her voice is hard. She recedes and advances and has to continually pierce the darkness and use the fractured splinters of her voice to become the mature poet she needs to be. In the end, her voice slowly emerges as something of beauty and radiance.

The poem *Star* echoes my project, *Setting art apart: Inside and outside the South African National Gallery (1895-2016)* in many ways. Finding my own voice and claiming its variable quality is a central preoccupation of this project. It is also about finding similar voices from across the creative spectrum that engage my voice instead of adopting a distant academic voice. My original intention was to examine and write a history of the South African National Gallery. Contesting the idea of the museum as a neutral space, I intended to demonstrate that the South African National Gallery was a multi-faceted monument to South Africa's artistic heritage. The facets I intended to study were clearly defined: the development of art collections that framed South African art history and how the dependence on parliamentary funding regularly implicated the museum in larger political debates surrounding national heritage and white identity. With a clear focus on

examining change within the institution, I thought to examine what collection practices said about the museum's preoccupations. The project was formulated as a history of the institution that considered the museum as part of a larger historical and political context. Although I was aware that there were different ways of writing history and from different positions, when I began this work I found the concept of writing a history unproblematic. Part of this lay in the nature of archives, where all my research was to take place. The documentation I found helped to trace a history in a particular way. I was to participate in a project of getting a history right. I dealt with the archival sources methodically and thematically, trusting them to explain the story. It was also important that I cultivate a certain kind of academic voice. A voice that was unproblematic, removed, anonymous and almost invisible, a voice that could hold up the evidence and base opinion on 'facts.' I was secure with this process because it was what I was taught. I was following a formula. This project was not personal. It was removed from me in all except to show that I did it well, coherently, consistently and definitively.

Alongside the idea of the project as an academic exercise was a persistent vein of unease, a deep fissure that no amount of getting the story 'right' would settle. It is the kind of unease South Africans often feel as we witness the effects of our history all around us, effects that were not recorded in the limitations of archives. There were other pointers to the problematic nature of my history writing. After the earlier colonial period at the museum discussed in Chapter Two (*Shaping a field of contention at the South African National Gallery: 1895-1947*) the more recent sources became sparse and records pertaining to the apartheid period were difficult to access. A librarian refused to give me access to records she said belonged to the apartheid endorsed South African Arts Association (SAAA). She said that these documents needed written consent to access. Following her directives and attempting to contact various people at the SAAA yielded no results. I started to realise that there were things people did not want in the public domain. Things people wanted hidden. I started to think about my own

viewpoint and how I willingly hid and submerged it in a story that had no bearing on my own lived experience. It was a story that fitted existing conventions.

I grew up in Cape Town, had studied art (both practice and theory) and yet I was entirely invisible to the white world I described. I came to realise that the points where my life rubbed up against the museum, however momentarily, exposed dynamics that my project was not dealing with at all. Replicating a colonial history, while fitting within the context of art history would stand in the way of understanding the institution from my perspective. Instead I decided to adopt a creative praxis, where I chose to include unifying elements that provided continuity in the project found in historical records but which also sought to disrupt it by reformulating the idea of history and identity as unstable. Histories as produced by the archive and my own voice are two elements that keep playing up against each other in this project. Through my readings of the history of the South African National Gallery from 1895 to 2016, this dissertation shows history to be unstable, flawed and fractured. I use my own voice to create a new space within the official discourse and to reformulate ideas that the archive presents as stable, contesting the view of history as chronological, complete and objective. I present myself as the antithesis to these neatly structured things. Through the pages of this project, I am many things, woman, art student, coloured woman, researcher, black woman, woman of colour, daughter and granddaughter. I am identities that have been designated to me and identities that I have embraced. Identity is not something that is clean and clear, it is something potent, murky and changeable. I choose to use the idea of identity as unstable to interrogate the formal discourses of the archive and the way historical concepts are conventionally managed.

### **Theoretical framework**

This project is therefore about the fractious history of the institution, not only about change between white stakeholders. It is about how the museum set itself apart from various constituencies in Cape Town, and how it normalised this

exclusion. From the very earliest phases of the project I understood that the museum differentiated between certain groups. Pierre Bourdieu (1993) allowed me to theorise difference and to see the museum as a field of cultural production. Bourdieu (1993) argued for a methodology that brings together an interdependent trio (field, habitus, capital) in order to understand the social world. At stake in the field is the accumulation of capital. Following Bourdieu (1993) I thought that his theory would lead to clues that would help unravel the power dynamics at the museum. My ideas of exclusion at the museum were broad and vague. It was an idea of the museum as making a space for some and not others, which can really be said of most social spaces. However under apartheid the way spaces were produced as segregated is something very particular and is central to my project. Differentiation in social spaces is what Bourdieu explains so well. What Bourdieu most effectively demonstrates is the social and economic fundamentals of a system of cultural preferences. He seeks to demystify an inner artistic sensibility, by showing the inexpressible as social and measurable and reveals the hidden social forces threaded through aesthetic judgment. Patterns of high culture are therefore actually processes of appropriation. But while Bourdieu demonstrates these processes, his reading is ill suited to the South African situation.

Bourdieu's analysis does not account for a colonial legacy or for the deep fractures within South Africa society that go beyond class, where so much of this theorizing is situated. High culture in the South African context is equated with white culture and to suggest that people of colour seek to appropriate it for various reasons is problematic. It also takes me no closer to an understanding of exclusion at the art museum. Bourdieu's treatment of the museum also fails to pay attention to the complex mechanisms of inequality based on class, gender, sexuality, age and ethnicity. Museums have changed since Bourdieu's analysis and especially in the South African context they cannot be seen as simple agents of social reproduction.

Various events occurred that put me on another path, away from social theory and away from a reliance on written history told through archives. I found a

photograph (Figure 6) that shook the foundations of my research and made me realise that I had been on the wrong path. In the 1948 photograph, two black labourers hold up paintings to a white committee in the South African National Gallery. The photograph pointed clearly to race and power. In Chapter One, I frame my argument and I explain how this image became central to the way I conceptualised the project going forward. The photograph (Figure 6) made me realise many things, it made me realise my own positionality, how I was imitating writers in the art field that was defined by whiteness and the ways in which I was manufacturing the same kind of knowledge of the past. The photograph pushed me to think about the dynamic of racial power it represented, how whiteness came to be normalised in South Africa and how blackness was institutionalised by museums like the South African National Gallery as Other. It made me think of myself and my own voice and position, which led to thinking about my own racial designation. The photograph steered me onto a different course. It became evident that I needed to look at images of exclusion – of voices on the outside – and part of that process was claiming my own voice as a woman of colour. There were many such moments in this journey, moments of clarity and of recognition. There were also moments of confusion and moments when I had to work hard to unlearn things I had been taught. Rejecting Bourdieu's social theory I looked to theorizing that better served the scope of the project. The ideas of black feminism, postcolonialism and decolonial thinking worked better to situate the project in the postcolonial context of South Africa while considering the silenced voices of black women and thinking of a productive way forward from the ties of the past. These theoretical ideas will be discussed in Chapter One (*Setting art apart*).

## Chapter outline

I write about framing the project in Chapter One (*Setting art apart*). Ideas of Black Feminism speak to exclusion based on gender and race as well as the importance of personal experience and the liberatory function of using an autobiographical voice. I draw on Postcolonial theory to situate the black subject

in the discourse of white art history and I draw on decolonial theory to analyse postcolonial discursive spaces. Decolonial theory seeks to deconstruct received forms of knowledge within discursive spaces and offers the idea of a critical epistemic disobedience. Epistemic disobedience means looking at received forms of colonial/ apartheid knowledge, as constructed and as something to counter and oppose. I have chosen to use decolonial theory to deconstruct received forms of knowledge, this project is a form of decolonial knowledge production.

Throughout Chapter One something is implicit, something that is scarcely critiqued in discourses about art and art museums in South Africa. Race. The art world in South Africa is so profoundly white and since whiteness is not considered a race, race and whiteness are entirely ignored. Can you honestly write about a field that you are entirely excluded from without using your own voice? Who are you talking to if your voice is engulfed by emptiness and silence? This is the reason I had to find voices on the outside of the white world to echo my own, voices like Jennifer Davids, and many others who have accompanied me here. I could not find them in the white art world.



Figure 1: Andrew Lamprecht, Ed Young and Bruce Gordon, 2002.

Certainly there is enough anecdotal evidence to support the perception that art in South Africa remains centred on white privilege... In my view, Ed Young's 'Bruce Gordon' and the generally favourable reception that this work received in the art media provide the most vivid example of this. White South Africans staged a mock auction centred on the notion of selling someone as art. The 'work' was then 'donated' to the South African National Gallery and accepted by its acquisitions committee... if one of the premises of 'real time' work is to bridge 'art' and 'life' then Bruce Gordon presents a strong indictment of the failure of elements within South Africa's white art elite to bridge that gap. (Pissarra, 2004:183)

How does a photograph of three white men who are showing off their newly minted tattoos in 2002, speak to exclusion and white privilege in the Cape Town art world? On the left sits art historian Andrew Lamprecht raising his chin in a gesture of superiority, stretching his arm with the word 'Felicitas' tattooed on it. Clearly claiming his territory, his arm reaches across the naked chest of the man to his left. Bruce Gordon is the naked man his arm touches. With dishevelled hair Gordon looks less sure of himself and pinches his lips hesitantly, looking off to the side. Gordon has a number tattooed on his shoulder. Artist Ed Young, stands between Lamprecht and Gordon and looks delighted. Young shows a black



rectangle on his arm. Art critic Paul Edmunds (2003) described the art auction that took place at the South African National Gallery (SANG):

Of course, what everyone's neglecting to say is that this whole lark is mad. R52, 000 exchanged hands for a 'Kaapse kroegbaas' although it wasn't really for him, rather the 'concept' of him. In a further twist said 'kroegbaas' owns a bar called Jo'burg, which is situated in Cape Town. Anyway, he was bought by an art patron and bon vivant Suzy Bell who just piped the SANG's Marilyn Martin at the post. Bell kindly donated Gordon to the SANG.

Following this, people flocked to a first showing at the venue where they listened to well-respected artists and academic Penny Siopis (her glasses slipping critically far down her nose) expound the virtues and ramifications of the museums latest acquisition. We also heard the artwork speak for himself. Welcoming us all to his new home, 'where some changes are going to be made.' A poker bar in the annex he proposed and a conceptual strip show in the Lieberman Room...Personally I got a little lost when reading the texts accompanying this whole shenanigan. Prepared by Andrew Lamprecht, Michaelis Art Theory lecturer and (artist) Ed Young's colluder in all this, these texts describe in detail the art historical precedents and ramifications of this art work, both for the SANG and the art world in general. I believe Lamprecht implicitly, and I do enjoy the bits of Latin and French he throws in too... Bruce Gordon had an accession number in a tattoo. Young and Lamprecht each had one in sympathy. Young chose a black rectangle and Lamprecht the word 'Felicitas'-Latin for luck. While (artist and academic) Penny Siopis, opined on 'Bruce Gordon' the object and subject and further related his acquisition to the military's legal possession of conscripts' bodies while pondering the collections responsibility for his preservation, Marilyn Martin did a great job of milking the event for the all media kudos the gallery could get. (Edmunds, 2003:no pagination)

In a newspaper report describing the art auction, Douglas Carew (2002) wrote that:

Bored wives disillusioned with their spouses will perk up at the news that a Newlands husband has been sold for R52 000 and donated to the permanent collection of the South African National Gallery in Cape Town...Edward Young said that he decided to auction Gordon because as he got older his investment value dropped. 'It is one of my better works, but I would probably have got more if I had sold him a few years ago'... Gordon's wife artist Sue Williamson, put in R100 bid and her failure to recognise a masterpiece meant her man went to Suzy Bell for R52 000. Young hoped that his sale and the recent exhibition at the

national gallery featuring a doorman from the Mount Nelson Hotel, was a sign that South Africans were beginning to take conceptual art seriously. (Carew, 2002:26)

The tone of Carew's (2002) article suggests that the auction was light hearted and tongue in cheek. It is disturbing that for Carew, rich white women sit in their luxurious suburbs, hoping to exchange their middle aged husbands. For Carew, the piece was a clever conceptual exercise by rich people in the art world, which exists beyond the bounds of reality. In this context, the place of art is where rich white women reside. It is an enclave where an obscene amount of money is spent on frivolity. Where there is no judgment based on what is moral or right, and a doorman can be exhibited. Young, the artist, supports this idea. Conceptual art is easy and makes all things possible. While Carew gives insight to the art world, he fails to realise its relation to the real world. The truth is that the white art world has something fundamental to do with the real world. It is a world where deep disparities are allowed to exist, because it is not serious. But I contend that the white art world is very real and serious. It is an enclave of money, status, position, power and authority.

Quoted above, Mario Pissarra (2004) writes that the Bruce Gordon piece supports the idea that art in South Africa remains focused on white privilege. How does a conceptual piece about auctioning a white bar owner in the national gallery create this impression? Is it purely a case of race, that white men and women staged the event or does it run deeper? It points to the fact that whites have the authority to make statements about what the art world is, what it accepts and how it operates and who it decides is worthy of a place within it. These are things that are clearly prescribed and what this project, *Setting art apart* seeks to explore.

Pissarra (2004) has a problem with Young's work on various fronts, many of his issues stem from troubling notions of exclusion. Pissarra has a problem with the fact that auctioning people recalls Cape Town's legacy of slavery that goes unacknowledged. Slaves were sold in the centre of Cape Town, in close proximity to the South African National Gallery. 'Selling' a person even as a concept, is

deeply injurious to people of colour who have a history of slavery. The fact that white people in the country had the right to treat blacks as their private property, for real, more recently under apartheid is also unacknowledged. The fact that generations of established black artists did not get the same exposure in the national gallery that this work received also points to normalised exclusion.

Edmunds' (2003) article gives insight to how this work came to be taken seriously by looking at the identities of important players in the white art world. His article shows that art historians (Lamprecht), more established artists (Penny Siopis), art patrons (Suzy Bell) and museum directors (Marilyn Martin) all collaborate and work to keep the space of the art world functional and exclusive. The relationship between players in the art world is what *Setting art apart* examines. I propose that the art world exists as a system of networks of collaboration. In Chapter Two (*Shaping a field of contention at the South African National Gallery: 1895-1947*) I show how these networks were established as part of colonial Cape Town and were racialised. Over this period it was about division within the white art world that was small and parochial. It was inward looking, looking at early collections and decisions within the white community but it was outward looking by positioning itself in relation to the motherland, Britain. With increasing professionalization at the South African National Gallery, in the 1950's, the networks surrounding the museum became more prescribed and the hand of the state was felt more thoroughly. In Chapter Three (*The power of public and private spaces: Remapping the city and the South African National Gallery: 1949-1960's*), the force of the state and apartheid laws was felt more generally in the city with forced removals. Concomitantly, as the city was reformulated by forcing people of colour out of spaces that were declared white, the museum altered its narrative to one that celebrated a white heritage.

## Race

I have never been comfortable talking about race, this is partly because I turned 18 in 1994 and cast my first vote in the country's the first ever democratic election. In

the context of Desmond Tutu's 'Rainbow Nation' and our recent traumatic past I along with many of my peers chose to ignore race. Race is also something shameful for me and my family, although it still defines much of the parameters of our lives. The presence of shame is possibly because the racial designation 'coloured' was ascribed to us, it carries a legacy of pain that was threaded through our everyday lives. Tragically, Tutu's hopeful dream lies in ashes under the feet of self-serving bureaucrats. The legacy of colonialism and apartheid continues and endures. Trying to appropriate a white academic voice is not going to change that legacy. It will only group me with those who live in this country with their privileges intact and who continue to wield the power over those who are historically disadvantaged.

I realised that I could not do this project unless I 'came out' as coloured/ black/ woman of colour. All these are identities that I have carried on my skin but never carried in my heart and did not embrace as my own. The apartheid state categorised me as coloured and placed my life on a 'coloured' trajectory. All people lived separately and had state-determined destinies. I was to have enough schooling as a coloured secretary, coloured factory worker, a coloured teacher or a coloured nurse. A coloured woman helped to make her people's lives easier. My mother was a secretary and had schooling until fourteen, my grandmother had even less schooling, was a dressmaker and took in laundry. Although I grew up in a Muslim community, the women worked outside the home and had some economic independence. That did not mean that women were not limited and influenced by gendered pressures within apartheid-defined, delineated communities, but women were visible and vocal because they earned money.

Regardless of the struggle to survive the women in my family endured, I tried to conceal or forget about my racial identity. I hid it out of fear and deep shame, perhaps as a twisted reaction to having it imposed in the first place. Having an imposed identity speaks of a profound lack of agency and victimhood. What do you have if you cannot decide who you are for yourself? Through the project of this thesis I have come to realise that my racial identity has deeply impacted my

experiences of the white art world. The white art academic system works to uphold the white art world and so I expose my own experiences in the academic art system in Chapter Five (*The black body imagined in the white art world: 1990's*). I describe my time at art school at Rhodes University, and my later experiences at the University of Pretoria. My experiences were traumatic but revisiting them has been revelatory. I have always been on the outside and I finally embraced this. Chapter Five started me on a journey of claiming who I am.

My experiences with the creative scope of this project made me realise that I needed to reimagine an archival space and represent it as hybrid rather than conventional. I could not depend on the archive to tell stories of exclusion, of gaps in the narrative of people not there. The dynamics of exclusion and elision become an increasingly important part of the project. The project became larger than the South African National Gallery, it became about situating the museum in the changing context of Cape Town. By necessity it became a poetic exercise, of finding voices of solidarity instead of voices confirming an official history. I used the official voices in the archives but I interrogate them through my own voice and experiences. In this way, I found that the discursive space of the South African National Gallery, existing in isolation and having little bearing on its surroundings, did not only need to be deconstructed but it also needed to be opened up. The barriers that surrounded the museum needed to be shown to be porous to the society it existed within. In Chapter Three (*The power of public and private spaces: Remapping the city and the South African National Gallery (1949-1960's)*), I look at how the forced removals occurring in Cape Town and in South Africa at large was reflected in the permanent and temporary exhibition. I show that both the city and the museum were involved in a project of remapping. In a country such as South Africa, with violent histories of colonialism and apartheid, the world that the museum inhabited was imagined as white. White worlds existed as enclaves of privilege and separation. The idea of Art Worlds has been adapted from sociologist Howard Becker's use of the term in his book of the same title in 1982.

## Premise

My argument uses the idea of the art world as premise. Howard Becker (1982) described the art world as consisting of all the people who make up the activities surrounding the production of works which that world defines as art. Works of art are not the products of individual makers but are collective products of all the people who cooperate through the art world's conventions. The art museum is part of the art world. Becker (1982) also shows how embedded art institutions were in a social context and political context. Museums are repositories for art and give art the highest kind of institutional approval. Museum trustees usually represent the wealthiest classes because they assist the museum with money and art and in return they get positions of authority (Becker, 1982:117). At the South African National Gallery, the museum followed a similar trajectory. Its origins lie in a story of small colonial aspirations and of establishing an amateur gallery for the English-speaking inhabitants of Cape Town. There was no need for a National Gallery at that time, because in the minds of the colonizers the nation resided at the metropolitan centre, at the 'real' National Gallery, London. However, nationalizing pursuits forged ahead in 1910 when there was a need to celebrate and reinforce the Union of South Africa and appeal to both English and Afrikaners. However, there was an enduring legacy of British art because an early academic director imposed British art on the institution. The museum therefore became part of an 'Aesthetics of Union' but with a strong British leaning (as discussed in Chapter Two). By the time the Afrikaner Nationalists came into power in 1948 there was a greater need for professionalizing the museum while also instilling a clearer political program. The legacy of the English and Afrikaners were to be formally included and pointed out in exhibitions. By the time of high apartheid in the 1980's the pressure of the state at the South African National Gallery was strongly felt, as was the need to portray the image of objective professional practices. Chapter Four shows the museum positioned in a divided white art world and points to discourses of exclusion based on State President PW Botha's political discourse of 'total strategy' and the 'Communist threat.' Botha's policies had very real and horrific consequences on black artists who opposed apartheid. Chapter Five (*The black body imagined in the white art world: 1990's*)

shows how black women were dehumanised in the art academy under apartheid and Chapter Six shows how black women were used again in a project of 're-dressing' the museum. Chapter Six (*Rebranding the South African National Gallery: Appropriating Africa and the black body: 1990's- 2000's*) is set at a time during negotiations between the apartheid state and black liberation movements. I suggest that the museum manifested political change in the country by shape shifting in its outward form while retaining its former structures.



Figure 2: Rhodes art school 1993: *Mary Coombes and me.*

As it stands, although chronological, this project is not a history of the South African National Gallery. It is not a narrative of sequential events, it is not a record of various documents available in libraries and archives and it does not undertake to look at change at the institution in isolation. Instead I have sought to look for new methods of investigating, of ways of opening up a closed field of art and museum history by creating new discursive spaces. It is a project that has required opening myself up, it is where I have come to find myself. Through it I find my voice.



## Chapter One

### *Setting Art Apart*

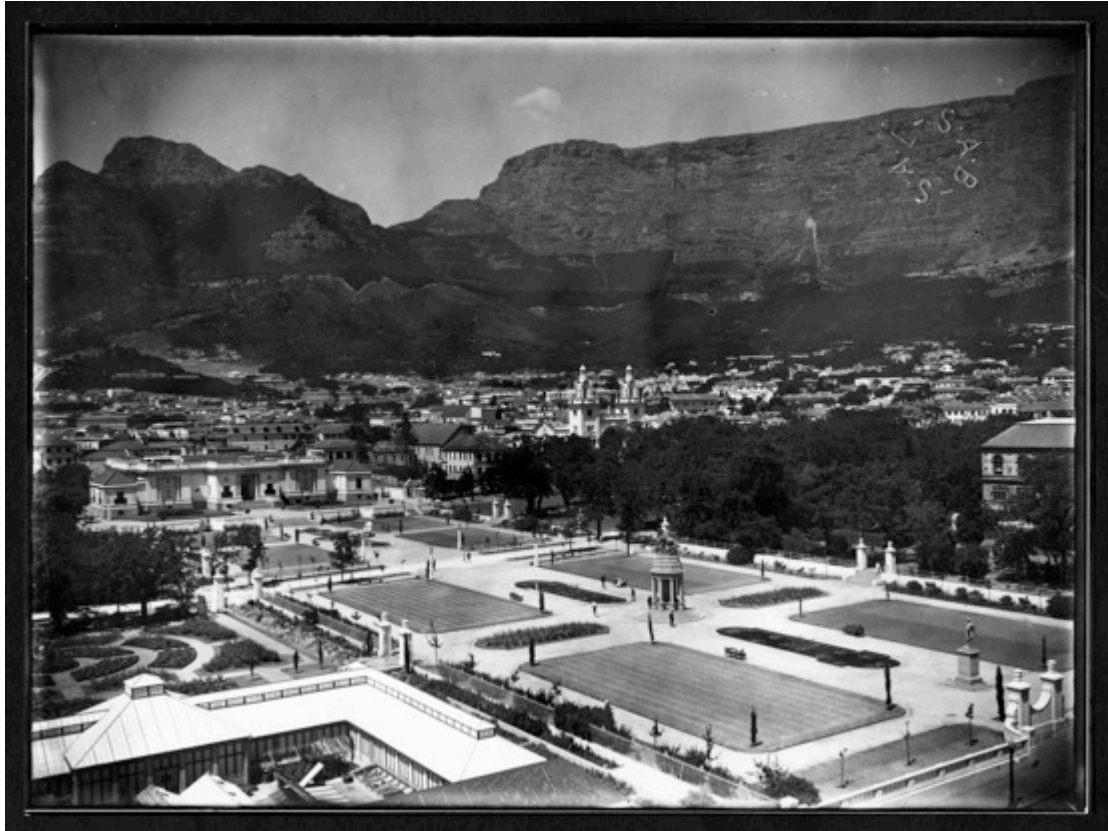


Figure 3: *Company Gardens and the South African National Gallery, 1930.*

The history of colonization, imperialism is a record of betrayal, of lies, and deceits. The demand for that which is real is a demand for reparation, for transformation. In resistance, the exploited, the oppressed work to expose the false reality—to reclaim and recover ourselves. We make the revolutionary history, telling the past as we have learned it mouth-to-mouth, telling the present as we see, know, and feel it in our hearts and with our words. (hooks, 2015:20)

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The archival photograph of the South African National Gallery (Figure 3) in Cape Town, taken in the year it opened, documents its colonial position. Surrounded by French-style gardens with grass beds and flowers arranged around a strict axis,



the museum positions itself as part of the narrative of white power. To the left are the remnants of Jan van Riebeeck's original vegetable garden. It was planted in 1652 when Cape Town was used as a refreshment station for Dutch sailors en route to the East in search of spices. The spaces around the museum are organised as a framework of control. It is literally a white space, and the museum is part of a colonial town that strived to order the landscape according to a European scheme, despite being situated at the foot of a mountain unique to Africa. The photograph is not entirely free of life, but the life in Cape Town is not what it seeks to capture. Instead it seeks to show the state's control over the landscape.

I start the first chapter with this photograph, because it provides a key to how my thinking and argumentation unfold in this thesis. The photograph shows how the museum and white culture were conceptualised in the city. The stylised designs of the surrounding architecture and gardens position the museum as integral to colonial history. Situated behind war memorials and war heroes, it is a museum 'set apart', not part of the familiar, the every-day. The state has positioned it here to delineate, literally trace, a physical lead-up to the messages it conveys. The museum is at once forbidding and remote, intimidating and unapproachable. The museum is an easy place to be marginalised from but it is at the same time difficult to find physical traces of such marginalisation, because the structural designs of the museum and its surrounds are also sanitised, stripped of anything that would disrupt its clean and rigorously conceived European lines and planes.

## **1.2 South African National Gallery**

The South African National Gallery was crafted in the jaws of Cape Town's troubled past. It was shaped through an entanglement of two separate but related European colonialisms, where white minority rule shaped the museum in the image of its own likeness. In 1930, it was a modest temple to white European art, a copy of its prototype in the metropolis London, but one that serviced the English men and women of industry who came to Cape Town at the turn of the century

better than a grand museum that served the aristocracy back home. During the early years of its establishment, it had links with the British art academy by using art buyers and the collaborations between academics from the Michaelis School of Fine Art, which had strong British leanings (Tietze, 2011:165-177). Later, by the 1950's (Figure 4) it served the Afrikaner nationalists as a site that emphasised



Figure 4: *View of the South African National Gallery, 1950.*

the European lineage of Afrikaans-speaking settlers, helping to celebrate a white African identity. At this time, South Africa was increasingly isolated from the rest of the world, especially at a time of growing decolonisation in the rest of Africa and after South Africa had broken ties with the Commonwealth in 1960. At the height of apartheid, due to cultural boycotts, the institution became increasingly isolated from the world and few overseas collections were exhibited. Nor was art by international artists purchased. With global isolation during apartheid the apartheid state attempted to position the museum outside of time and outside of the change occurring in the rest of Africa. Instead, the state repositioned its art

with countries such as Chile who were also out of favour with the international community. By the 1990's, South Africa was finally shedding the shackles of centuries long European domination, and exhibitions and collections showcased a moment of political possibility and change. Art known as 'resistance art' was rapidly acquired, which did succeed in jolting an otherwise impassive institution. At the time, black women were also used in a bid to 'redress' the museum, a strategy that I address in a later chapter.

The museum was a place of white privilege, a place where art was set apart from the broader South African reality and its complexities of cultural diversity. The museum has therefore fiercely excluded people and cultural origin, race, gender, and economic circumstances determined how it practiced exclusion. The institution's message was explicit and clear: some were more equal than others. In a city where most people are black, the museum had to set itself apart both physically and ideologically. Studying exclusion and silence, things not there, absences in my personal experience and engagement in life-world, has been difficult. Photographs, annual reports, exhibition catalogues and newspaper clippings show what institutions want to record and document for future access. Institutions are not interested in absences – their omissions remain untold. This project is an analysis of concealed narratives about our shared past and of silences that are on the outside. To do this, I must attempt to rupture the historical membrane that surrounds white power and privilege. Alongside this journey of finding that which has been omitted, has been my own journey. My outer journey has taken place in libraries and archives but my inner journey has taken place inside my heart as I tried to recall a suppressed and bruised voice. My journey only really started when I realised my own place on the outside. To challenge exclusion, I need to step out of silence myself.

Part of this journey occurred through unearthing painful truths about South Africa's artistic history and part of the discovery process was a growing recognition of the validity of my own painful experiences. My aims have shifted to moving closer to my own understanding, to gaining understanding of my own

positioning. Speaking out is the first step towards accomplishing these aims. I speak to name who I am in a field that is unanimously white, I assert my voice to be recognised and I speak as an act of self-determination. I also realise that my position on the outside affords me a valuable perspective and that giving voice to my perspective is most liberating. I do this while acknowledging that the visual arts as a field is unequal and is still a site of colonial violence and deep disparity. This project is an act of resisting dominant histories and dominant discourses that continue to exclude voices such as mine.

My voice changes through the chapters. It is my intention to show its slow emergence from the hardened carapace of academic discourse to materialise as gentler and truer to myself. Earlier chapters are tighter and more closed, my voice is remote, sounding like an imitation of the tones of the discourses that I have been taught. I have found that scholarly texts often conceal more than they reveal and I mimicked their conventions unintentionally in my writing. To imitate with conviction, I necessarily had to silence my own voice. Over its course, the project turns into a creative and intimate space in which I come to grasp the validity of my own voice. I move from the public world of scholarship to the private world of autobiography. I insert my own story into the story of the white art world to speak my truth towards becoming a powerful reality. This is a reality that I have never been afforded in white art institutions before.

### 1.3 Doing theory

When our lived experience of theorising is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collecting liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two, that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other. Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfils this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorising toward this end. (hooks, 1994:61)

It has been difficult to find voices that speak to mine, as it has been difficult to find theories that open up rather than obscure my chosen areas of investigation,

and move my argument to new places of discovery. Postcolonial theory and decolonial thinking has opened doors to understanding the enduring legacy of white privilege at the museum. Decolonial theory helped to shape my ideas of black art falling outside the parameters of the white art world. Both positions have informed how black invisibility is constructed as part of white dominance. However informative, both areas of theory neglected the value of a personal woman's voice. I find that black feminist theory holds the personal woman's voice in high regard, seeking to make it heard rather than silencing it. While my analysis does not limit itself to looking at the exclusion of black women from the museum, the black feminist theoretical stance allows me to look more broadly at exclusion. As a theoretical framework for this study, black feminist theory is appropriate since it draws on ideas that arise from the construction of knowledge in the white art world without suppressing a personal, first-person voice or the voices of black women. Black feminist theory speaks to my position as researcher and as a woman of colour.

I have come to realise that women of colour – people such as myself - constitute the most hidden and most excluded cohort in the history of the South African National Gallery. Women of colour either are the most invisible or are entirely absent. More recently, we can be found fleetingly in exhibitions and in a few acquisitions, but we are not an enduring presence. And yet at various times our presence has been called upon without acknowledgement to rewrite the story of the museum. The rural black woman's position is especially dehumanizing. In the history of the museum rural black women and their artistic work has been expediently renamed as art (see Chapter Six). Displayed ethnographically, this work reinforced racial and cultural difference. Suspended in time it emphasised tribal definitions and so served to fit apartheid definitions of difference. Rural black women were used as subjects in much the same way as ethnic minorities were used as part of dioramas in the South African Museum.

I have carried two treasures with me since the start of this project. Both are pinned to my wall and condense what this project means to me. They also clearly

represent the theoretical framework that this chapter proposes, reminding me of the work that needs doing. One is a copy of a photograph (Figure 5) and the other a quote by writer and academic, Toni Morrison. The photograph is of the Xhosa prophetess Nongqawuse, and fellow prophetess Nonkosi. Nongqawuse (on the left, Figure 5) is the older of the two females, yet still in her teens. Nonkosi, the second figure, is a girl-child only eight years of age. Nongqawuse's prophecies culminated in the cattle killing movement of 1856-1857. She claimed that she had met the spirits of her ancestors who told her to command the Xhosa to destroy all their crops and kill all their cattle. In return the British settlers would be swept into the sea. Convinced of the truth of the prophecies, the cattle killing movement took hold. Historians estimate that 400,000 head of cattle were killed. Nongqawuse's prophecies resulted in extreme famine and at least 40,000 Xhosa died of starvation. Resistance to colonial rule, which the Xhosa had sustained for eighty years before the cattle killing movement, was broken and all their remaining lands were appropriated to white settlers (Peires, 1987:43). Shortly after her prophecy had failed to happen according to her testimonies of her ancestors' voices, Nongqawuse was captured and handed over to the colonial administration. Historian Patricia Hayes (2007:141) writes that Nongqawuse was hastily dressed and photographed in King Williamstown soon after her arrest.





Figure 5: *Nongqawuse and Nonkosi, 1858.*

Nongqawuse's internal world of emotional pain, dejection, and hopelessness is visible in Figure 5. She is a woman lost to the world, rejected by her people, captured by the enemy, entirely alone, and therefore excruciatingly vulnerable. This photograph also shows how Nongqawuse was shaped by a white hand into

something recognisable to the colonialist eye - dressed in costume, a parody of colonialist decency. She epitomises the black woman 're-dressed', a phenomenon evident in the photograph that eerily echoes the history of the South African National Gallery. It is an image of a black woman fashioned by someone else. Throughout this project I will show how the black woman has been 'fashioned' to fit into the white art world. The fringed beaded thing that hangs around Nongqawuse's neck and the large loose cloth draped over her shoulders, perhaps even the head cloth, are all part of a costume, a form of dress that defaces rather than affirms. Nongqawuse was made safe by the hands of another and was captured through a camera lens. Held in place, immobile, and an illusion.

The historical record is unclear about the identity and origin of Nonkosi, the child who sits next to Nongqawuse in Figure 5, but her clothes look very different. She wears a voluminous dress made of paisley patterned cotton cloth probably originating from Britain, which is worn under a shawl pinned in the front. A shawl pinned, because Nonkosi might not have been familiar with or comfortable with the ill-fitting costume, not caring if it's strange parts fell off. Records show that Nongqawuse was alone, she was an orphan and her uncle who had been her guardian had died of starvation during the cattle killings (Peires, 1987:43). She was alone in the world and surely felt personally responsible for the near annihilation of her people. Whatever is weighing her down, weighs heavily. The colonial need to document events for posterity is also recorded in this picture. The action of recording was considered scientific and forward thinking - an activity that separated the ruler from the ruled, the civilised from the uncivilised. However, the way the historical record was being misappropriated is also documented. Nongqawuse was dressed according to an appropriated idea of a prophetess - one that is semi-African, semi-European.

Next to Nongqawuse's and Nonkosi's photograph of 1858 on my wall is a recent quote by writer Toni Morrison:



This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilisations heal. I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence. Like failure, chaos contains information that can lead to knowledge—even wisdom. Like art. (Toni Morrison, 2015:no pagination)<sup>1</sup>

These two pieces speak together to me. Toni Morrison's voice comes from another place and time. The United States is a land of wealth and privilege, but it also has a legacy of slavery and black poverty and it remains a land where most black women are excluded from social, political and economic power. For Morrison, writing is the work of activism. Writing is a way of moving forward. She urges us to work hard to find our voices. Only through making our presence known, through becoming visible, will the silence break. Healing can only happen when the fear, self-pity, and despair recede.

It is through these two voices that I know what my work is to be. Nongqawuse speaks to the condition of black women in the nineteenth century, while Morrison shows that black women still have a long way to go to find our voices and to make them heard. There is still much work left undone. Both pieces trigger emotion in me and they point to things that are close to my heart. My work is to show not only absences and exclusion, but also oppression and domination. In this thesis, therefore, I reflect on how things came to be the way they are, while at the same time, I discover how much or how little they have changed. In order to be true to my area of research I must be true to myself. I must re-examine the very idea of theory, were I to find it useful at all. The following words of bell hooks (2015:19) mirror my conviction:

It has been a political struggle for me to hold to the belief that there is much which we—black people—must speak about, much that is private that must be openly shared, if we are to heal our wounds (hurts caused by

---

<sup>1</sup> Toni Morrison wrote this article in response to the U.S election campaign of conservative candidate Donald Trump.

domination and exploitation and oppression) if we are to recover and realise ourselves.

The ideas of black feminists in the US such as Morisson and academic and activist bell hooks made a deep impact on my thinking around theory. bell hooks, is a public intellectual, scholar, transgressive teacher, black woman, and activist. Her words make me believe that theory can be at the heart of matters, because anybody can think about how the world works, seek to understand it, and insist upon change. bell hooks, the pen name of Gloria Watkins, was a symbolic antithesis of the person of Gloria. Society dictated that she be a quiet, submissive and pleasing southern girl. Bell Blair Hooks was Watkins' maternal great grandmother and she was a woman of spirit who was not afraid to speak her mind. By renaming herself, hooks created a space of resistance and rebellion. She also created a space of creativity where she could restore herself.

I found a place of sanctuary in 'theorizing,' in making sense out of what was happening. I found a place where I could imagine possible futures, a place where life could be lived differently. This 'lived' experience of critical thinking, of reflection and analysis, became a place where I worked at explaining the hurt and making it go away. Fundamentally I learned from this experience that theory could be a healing place. (hooks, 1994:61)

hooks suggests an expansive idea of theory and theorising. But she also shows the centrality of lived experience, of an autobiographic voice. Her work shows that her own voice adds to her theoretical positionality and does not detract from it. Importantly, it is through her voice that hooks transgresses the role of a passive observer. Her voice allows her to nurture a 'critical subjectivity' (Del Guadalupe Davidson & Yancy, 2009:3). Theory does not only serve her to imagine a new reality, it is not only imaginative. It serves a purpose and allows her to act. In this way hooks destabilises voices that have sought to silence her.

#### **1.4 Visual culture and the postcolonial**

To position theory as liberatory I have found, as with the example of Nongqawuse's photograph and Toni Morrison's quote, the creative scope of this

project needs to be heterogeneous. Art history was developed in South Africa as part of empire formation and carries only the fingerprints of the unseen and unacknowledged Other. Given how entangled art history is with the colonial history of the institution, following Sumathi Ramaswamy (2014) I look at the South African National Gallery as part of visual culture rather than strictly within the disciplinary bounds of art history. I use the ideas of visual culture and consider the products of the South African National Gallery as part of visual regimes of power. I have also chosen to think of the discipline of art history as associated with the colonial and apartheid history of the museum. Visual culture in contrast is a way of analysing and being critical of positions of power.

The South African National Gallery is fundamentally about displaying art or visual objects. The art museum therefore constructs 'regimes of visibility' (Ramaswamy, 2014:1). This is the way the art object, the display, the space, the interpretative framework, and the history of the institution interact to shape the way viewers experience the visual. Through institutions of the visual, such as the national gallery, visual images become forms of knowledge and power that can be reproduced. Visual culture is interdisciplinary and has an accommodating relationship to postcolonial studies. Art history is considered a western European development and as such, visual culture calls for *histories of art* to expand the category. Influenced by postmodernism, visual culture merges 'high' and 'low' forms of art, it acknowledges that visual content can migrate across multiple forms (for example: fine art and film, graphic design and urban design). It emphasises the hybrid nature of texts, images, and sounds, rejecting the study of these aspects in isolation. Visual culture therefore refuses the study of 'pure visibility' by studying an artwork or an artist outside the network of media and institutions. For my purposes, an important aspect of visual culture is that it acknowledges the institutional embeddedness of the visual. Whereas the field of art history only acknowledges institutions such as universities and art museums, visual culture acknowledges expanded categories. Visual culture proposes that art museums and universities not only perpetuate and preserve forms of collective identity but that they mediate power and create identities too (Irvine, 2011).

The following discussion and photographs (Figures 6 and 7) show how race, difference, and work were entangled at the South African National Gallery. It also shows how institutions such as the museum constructed the identities of black people and saw black people as labourers.



Figure 6: *Two unnamed men hold up paintings to the Board of Trustees at the South African National Gallery, 1948.*

### 1.5 Postcolonialism and the subaltern subject

The year is 1948, the start of apartheid in South Africa. The photograph (Figure 6) shows that although apartheid was just beginning, racial and social stratification was already entrenched at the museum. When I found this picture in an archival box, I felt a heartbreaking sadness and an anger I could not explain. I was witnessing a very basic demonstration of colonial violence. The young man's gaze directed at the seated audience in the picture is not being met by any of them. To them, he is absent, invisible, an instrument of servitude. The positions of both men holding the paintings of South African landscapes to the seated group of 'knowledgeable' trustees, are formal, quietly submissive, standing to attention, yet their presence is firmly unacknowledged. Besides documenting the selection of paintings for a significant exhibition, and the suppressed tension markedly at play in the photograph as much as in the institution, the photograph also speaks of a deep divide and exclusion practiced at the gallery and communicated outwards by the body-language of the seated luminaries. Art was for white people, to be produced by them and to be appreciated by them alone. They determined what art *is*, it is their story to tell. It also shows to whom art is *not* meant to be. The paintings are turned away from the black men, they are not part of the viewing audience, unconcerned with the aesthetic demands of art and its creation. Black men are only meant for physical labour. These men have no agency, they are directed and commanded, they have the status of easels and they are dressed by people other than themselves in uniforms fit for a gallery. Although the name of each seated person has survived history, we could never know the names of the two black men.

Written in pencil on the back of the photograph are the names: Boonzaier, TB Davie, and Prowse. All three were members of the board of trustees, Boonzaier and Prowse were from the South African Arts Association, Davie was the Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town. The trustees' function was ambiguous at the date of the photograph since they were under fire from the press over the illegal sale of art from the permanent collection. The photo appears to document the selection of art for the first overseas exhibition of South African art at the Tate

in London. The museum eventually selected seven paintings (South African National Gallery annual report 1948/1949: no pagination). The Tate exhibition was of critical importance to the newly elected nationalist government. As the pressures of decolonisation were increasing in the rest of Africa, the Afrikaner nationalists wanted to show ideological links to the British Empire while simultaneously demonstrating their independence through exhibiting education and sophistication in the cultural scene (The Argus, 1949). DF Malan, then Prime Minister of South Africa, opened the exhibition and described it as a 'silent ambassador for good will and understanding' (The Sunday Times, 1948: no pagination). Concurrently, the exhibition served to 'correct any lurking suspicion that the Union was exclusively concerned with gold mines and rugby football' (The Sunday Times, 1948: no pagination).

The annual reports for the years 1947/1948 and 1948/1949 shed further light on the photograph. At the time, the trustees were dealing with fallout from the illegal sale of art from the collection by Director Edward Roworth.<sup>2</sup> The press criticised board members and the function of the gallery was questioned. The trustees made an appeal to the government to have the Inspector of Public Services make recommendations on the system of administration and the sales of paintings from the museum. The government selected John Stratford, a British convener, to conduct the inquiry (South African National Gallery, Annual Report 1947-1948: no pagination).

Another archival photograph (Figure 7) evokes a similar impression of the ruler's positioning of the colonial subject. A huge painting encased in a gilded frame shows a full portrait of an official looking man wearing a pith helmet. The painting is being carried down the front steps of the gallery. A pith helmet is iconic of colonial attire, worn to protect the pale and delicate-skinned European

---

<sup>2</sup> Edward Roworth was an academic and an artist. He was simultaneously Director of the South African National Gallery (1940-1949) and Dean of the University of Cape Town's art school, Michaelis (1937-1953). He was never officially appointed by the government to the South African National Gallery, he held the post in an honorary capacity (South African National Gallery, Annual Report 1947-1948: no pagination)

wearer from the harsh sun of the colonies. A group of black men wearing overalls do the moving. It is strenuous work, requiring many hands and careful manoeuvring. A white man, idle-handed in a suit, follows a short distance behind, as if safeguarding the precious cargo but certainly leaving the heavy carrying and lifting to other hands. The gallery building is a monumental and ornate presence with its horizontally cut stone steps, fluted pillars, decorative mouldings, and multi-paned Cape Dutch style windows.



Figure 7: *South African National Gallery, 1960.*

This painting leaving the gallery was important enough to warrant documentation. The painting symbolically signified a trace of English heritage being removed (erased) from the gallery. In 1960 Afrikaner nationalism was consolidated and it was the beginning of more brutal state intervention. This is the year of the iconic Sharpeville massacre where the police opened fire on an unarmed gathering of protesters, killing 67 of them. Sharpeville led to further



mass protest action across the country and resulted in the banning of the ANC and the PAC.<sup>3</sup> The state declared a state of emergency, giving the police increased powers of detention (Nigel Worden 1994:107). By 1960 numerous former African colonies had already gained independence.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, the South African Nationalist Party who was in power at the time became even more hostile towards British rule and its commitment to decolonisation in Africa and by 1961, South Africa broke with the Commonwealth and became a Republic.

Figure 7 demonstrates that dirty work and physical labour require special clothes. Contrary to people who worked with their minds, which qualified them to oversee and maintain a safe distance from manual labour. However, the fact that the man on the right wears smart clothes under his overalls, a hat, a tie and a white collar shows that small signs of personality and agency emerged despite that sameness of the work clothes. Equally pertinent is that dirty work required that you be black. At a time when the demagogue of Apartheid ideology, Hendrik Verwoerd, was the head of state, this photograph showed how work had been racialised. In this context, it not only shows the unseen apparatuses behind the collection and display of art at the museum, i.e. the people who labour behind the scenes, but it also shows how art can be a potent symbol signalling political change. The photo shows the museum to be a dynamic field, or 'contact zone' where meaning is constructed and reconstructed within its spaces.<sup>5</sup> Along with the departure of the stiff, pith helmeted official, new spaces were made available to tell new stories of art. New voices could enter, giving the orders, ironically while the same staff would continue to do the heavy lifting, the physical labour, and the dirty work. Various writers theorise the position of the postcolonial subject and postcolonial subjectivity to reject colonial categories. Here, I would like to draw on ideas of the

---

<sup>3</sup> The African National Congress, Pan Africanist Congress

<sup>4</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia and Togo all gained independence in 1960 (Lazarus, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> James Clifford speaks of museums as spaces where there is a possibility for intercultural exchange. The contact zone allows the museum to be perceived as an on going historical, political, moral relationship that is 'a power charged set of exchanges' (Clifford, 1997:197).



postcolonial voice to demonstrate the possibilities of resistance and activism. The basis of this argument resides in postcolonial theory and decolonialist thinking.

### **1.6 Postcolonial Theory**

Harry Garuba (2016) provides a useful definition of postcolonial theory, which he argues is about:

...positions of enunciation, methods of inquiry and analysis, concepts, theories and critical practices which emphasise and interrogate the legacies of empire that are sedimented in our social worlds, our ways of knowing, our modes of representation and the frameworks and paradigms through which we produce knowledge. (Garuba, 2016:no pagination)

Three points stand out in Garuba's (2016) definition. Firstly, he emphasises the position of the speaker, especially regarding the power exercised from that position, the power of assertion or expression. This could be applied to the power implicit in relationships of domination, the relationship between master and slave or the colonizer and the colonised, for example. In such a relationship, the master/colonizer has power over the slave/colonised and therefore has the sole right and authority to speak and power to execute ideas. In these ways, institutions such as the South African National Gallery articulate ideas and ideologies of the people in power. The institution has a 'position' and it 'speaks' from a certain and well-defined vantage point.

Garuba's (2016) second point is that the legacies of empire are deeply enmeshed with our social world through what we know and how we represent the world. He hereby implies that the fact that we are in a 'post' colony by no means suggests that the effects of colonialism have ceased. The legacies of empire are 'sedimented', which implies that they run deep, glued fast in complex and multiple layers, infiltrating many of our institutions and our ways of knowing the world. Likewise, this reality extends to all aspects of our lives, our social realities, how we live, where we live and how we produce knowledge. The deeply sedimented nature speaks to the profoundly enduring history of the South

African National Gallery, and how this was used to show that the colonizers belonged and had ownership rights of the country. In a 1930 newspaper article entitled, 'South Africa's Royal Academy' the use of local stone used in the building was celebrated. 'Ladybrand stone' was used in the entrance and 'Free State stone' was used as paving in the courtyard, and the feature fountain was carved from 'Warmbath stone' (Cape Times, 1930:no pagination). By highlighting the colonial desire to replicate the British art academy through using local stone, the author demonstrates a sense of ownership that runs as deep as the sedimented rocks collected from around the country and an enduring sense of entitlement to the right to belong.

Garuba's (2016) third point suggests that the construction of knowledge is itself a legacy of empire. As such, knowledge is not neutral. Instead knowledge is produced through frameworks and paradigms that serve, support, and delineate the empire. The rhetoric of empire is subverted in postcolonial theory to show that knowledge that has become normalised had in fact been discursively invented by Europe. For example, a central concern at the South African National Gallery was the development of a South African canon of art. This was itself a European construction aimed at fulfilling a need of the white portion of the South African population. This canon was discursively constructed to mimic European models, culminating in the rhetoric of exclusion and superiority that marked white rule. The canon consciously neglected South African artists of colour, and for many years it relegated people of colour as only fit for manual labour within the institution, incapable of reaching the higher functions of art and its creation. In this way art was used to produce colonialist difference or distinction between cultures, which translated as the narrative of white progress.<sup>6</sup>

### **1.7 Decolonial Thinking**

A central critique by decolonialist thinking on colonialist thinking is the fiction of a universal history as told from the west. This means that western civilisation has

---

<sup>6</sup> More details on the collection and its ideological approach will be discussed in Chapter Three.

not only constructed its own history, it has given itself the epistemic privilege of narrating its local history as universal history. Walter Mignolo (2013:129-150) challenges the universalising of knowledge that not only serves the west but also absorbs local knowledge, voices, and cultures. In this way, the west sub-alternates local knowledge and creates epistemic privilege, that is privileging knowledge or ways of knowing that is constructed to conform to western norms. To my mind, decolonialist thinking is about the future and moving forward, also at the South African National Gallery. It is about changing the dominant discourse of western supremacy and of adopting an 'epistemic disobedience'. This entails a need to rethink categories of organised and received knowledge of and about the white art world and the white art museum. Adhering to decolonialist thinking does not mean that the South African National Gallery should be razed to the ground so that all traces of a racially dominated past be eradicated. There is no such thing as returning to a pristine past, unmarked by history. Rather it would be useful for the bruised voice of the black woman to unlearn the lessons of domination that colonialism had taught her.

### **1.8 The subaltern and border thinking**

The position of the subaltern refers to subordinate populations that are socially, politically, and geographically outside the power structures of the colony. Attempting to provide a counter history by studying areas that are neglected by official history, Gayatri Spivak (1988: 271-313) states that the subaltern classes are silenced because of hegemonic power structures. These are structures within society that maintain the power of the state. Spivak suggests that to be heard, the subaltern must adopt western ways of knowing, of thought, reasoning, and language. The subaltern is therefore required to conform the expression of their non-western knowledge to western ways of knowing the world to be acknowledged. Decolonialist thinking repositions the subaltern as an active resistant agent. I intend to use autobiographical narrative in this study to get closer to ideas of exclusion and marginalisation. In this way, I intend to subvert a subaltern voice and partake in alternative knowledge production. I intend to

destabilise the dominant narrative of progress at the South African National Gallery.

Mignolo (2013:134) encourages an 'epistemic disobedience' where ways of thinking encouraged by the west be counteracted with local knowledges and ways of knowing. He suggests that this will undo epistemic damage entrenched through and wrought by colonialism. This ties in with his project of 'delinking'. In this way, he calls for the change of content as well as the concepts of the conversations of modernity/coloniality. A decolonial epistemic shift will enable histories and thoughts to be understood as prior to European incursions. Mignolo's vision is for a connected history of encounters, and in the process, he calls for an epistemic delinking from the rhetoric of modernity.

Both Mignolo (2013) and Spivak (1988) look at the way knowledge is constructed in the West and its transferal to colonies and its production and process there. This is implicitly relevant to the construction of the canon at the South African National Gallery. It shows how the museum had to construct a canon to fit in as a museum like those in the West. The museum had to construct a kind of knowledge that included those that had the relevant historical knowledge and excluded those that did not.

For Mignolo (2013), tied to the critique of universal history is the idea of modernity. He rejects the idea of modernity as developing as an insular entity in the West. For Mignolo there is no modernity without coloniality. He believes that modernity is constitutive, integrally part of coloniality. Rather than rely on the fact that modernity had a localised origin, he shows it as connected to the broader histories of colonialism, empire, and enslavement. Bhabra (2014:119) sees Mignolo's (2000:67) 'colonial matrix of power' as the combination of the rhetoric of modernity (progress, development, and growth) and the reality of coloniality (poverty and inequality). Mignolo understands the colonial matrix of power as responsible not only for epistemic fictions, but also for contemporary global inequalities. According to Mignolo, the third world was not created by the people

who inhabit it, instead it was created by men and institutions, languages, and categories of the first world. To create independence of thought not only should third world subjects 'delink' from the dominant discourse, they should also engage in 'border thinking'.

The constitutive nature of modernity is central to Mignolo's (2013:131) idea of 'border thinking'. Border thinking involves thinking outside the spaces and time of modernity. This is thinking from the outside of the norms defined by western knowledge. Referencing Fanon (1952) and consistent with hooks' (2015) use of theory and autobiography, Mignolo sees border thinking as the biographical sensing of the black body in the third world, engaging in a politics of knowledge that is ingrained in the body and in local histories (Mignolo, 2013:132). While Mignolo's synthesis holds true for my project in terms of the colonial subject it is interesting that during the history of the South African National Gallery, whites saw themselves on the borders of the white world and as outsiders from Europe. The museum was created in imitation of similar European spaces, where whites could play out their European yearning. Using black people for the purposes of making the border or outside habitable they sought to conceptualise exclusion from Europe.

Figure 8, a photograph taken in 1938, shows the white yearning for inclusion, for civility and for recognition. Gazing up at the saccharine portraits of the British Royals, Princess Margaret and Princess Elizabeth, the nameless barefooted child gazes up in reverence and in wonder. Clutching his hands desperately, his clothes in disarray, he looks up longingly. I could not find the source of this photograph in the National Library, but many of the photographs in their collection come from the cities newspapers so it could have been taken for the purpose of popular distribution. The boy's image of white poverty below the large white portrait of wealth, privilege and fairy tale perfection presents a stark contrast. At a time when South Africa was a British colony, this image speaks volumes of the position of whites to the motherland. It was a position of longing for proximity to the patrimony of royalty in a country that was defined for them by personal white

endeavour and of minority status amongst the country's blacks. The idea of white endeavour was what was central to white success in South Africa. Endeavour would overcome poverty. But while whiteness is normalized in this photograph, black life, although so important to the success of white endeavour, went unacknowledged. Black existence was raced and racialized and simultaneously erased.

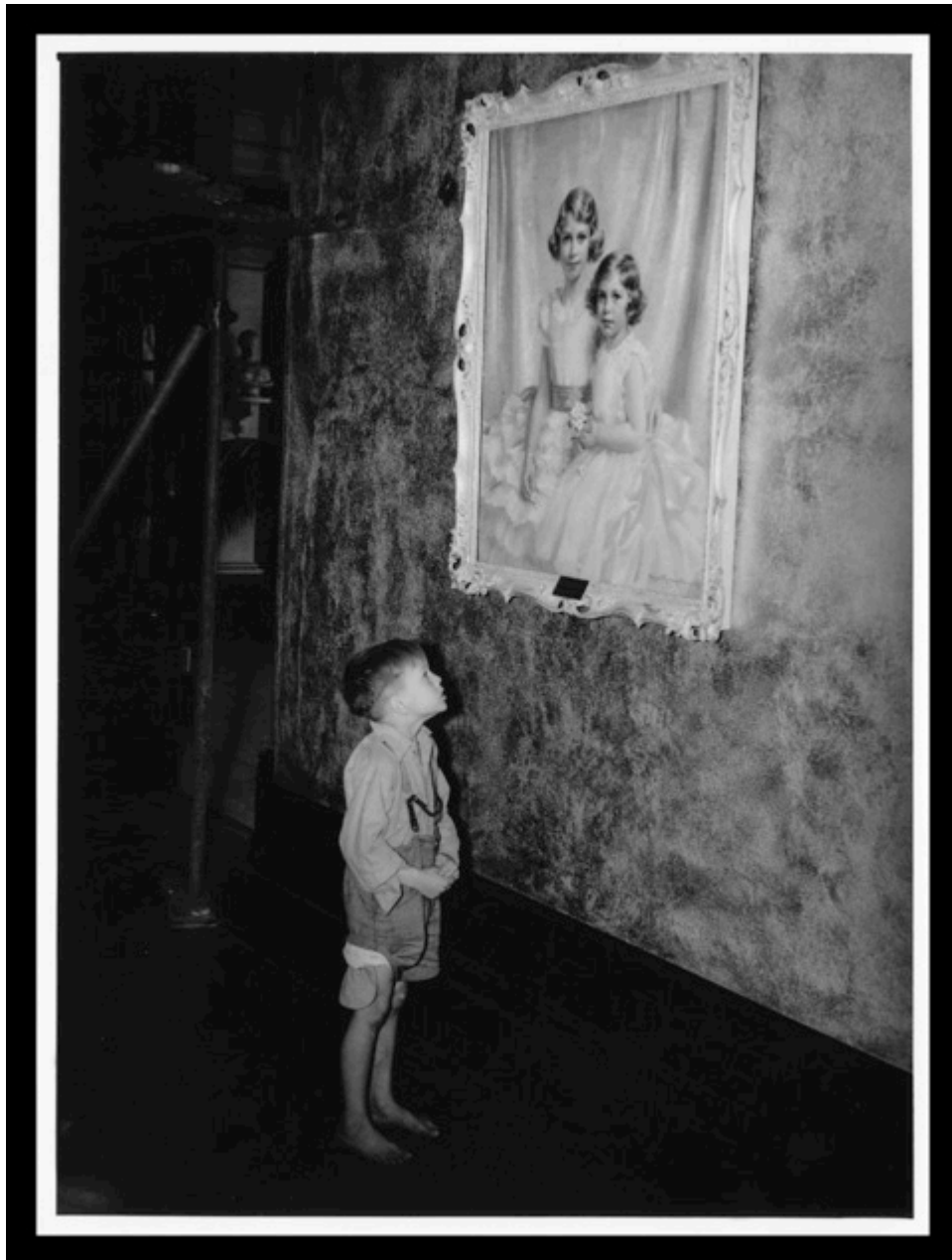


Figure 8: A child looks at a portrait of the two English princesses, Princess Margaret and Princess Elizabeth. South African National Gallery, 1938.

### 1.9 Syntheses: Whiteness and the construction of national identity

As long as race is something only applied to non-white people, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people. There is no more powerful position than that of being 'just' human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity. Raced people can't do that - they can only speak for their race. But non-raced people can for they do not represent the interests of a race. The point of seeing the racing of whites is to dislodge them/us from the position of power. (Dyer, 1997:2)

The South African National Gallery has been presented by various powerful constituents within the museum, such as directors and curators, as a coherent project with a clear cohesive vision. A central tenet of this vision was creating a canon of South African art and collecting art for the benefit of the nation. A canon of South African art as well as the nation meant different things at different times depending on who held the reigns at the institution and which constituents they had to appease. There was neglect in acknowledging the unseen at the museum. The workers seen in Figures 6 and Figures 7 were not acknowledged, even though they played a part in events that were important enough to document. Their presence at the museum has shed light on disparities at play at the institution. I contend that these disparities are concerned with normalising white rule.

Although it is not unusual for museums to be associated with imperial, classist, and sexist social orders in the Western paradigms of thinking, the fact that hierarchies of work were racialized at SANG gives the story of SA art a specific white bias. (Dibley, 2005:5)

However, the fact that work was racialized at the South African National Gallery gives the story of South African art a specific white bias. Lacking agency, the workers at the gallery are objects in the same way as the objects they are mandated only to move or protect rather than create or reflect on. The colonial encounter has dehumanised them. It goes without saying, but it is important to acknowledge that the position of whites in this torrid story is central.



The South African National Gallery was used as a vehicle for constructing national identity and forging a sense of belonging for whites in the city of Cape Town. The South African National Gallery was created to mimic and mirror the Empire through various visual practices. In the South African context, the museum produced definitions of 'art', the 'canon', and of the artistic genius. Collection practices, temporary exhibitions, and permanent displays all responded to the contemporary political climate. The mutations of national identity changed as the political context changed but it always meant an exclusion of the local black and heterogeneous population. As such I will not analyse it more than I already have, besides to say that it was part of a larger project of statecraft and of exclusion. I am interested in how these ideas have endured in the institution up to the present day. The discussion above leads me to assert that the whiteness that was constructed at the museum was part of a broader colonial project of knowledge production. Together with other fields, the field of art history shaped the physical and intellectual history. Archaeologist Nick Shepherd (2015) uses decolonial theory to write about excluded and absent voices from that field.

In comparative terms, I can now say that what archaeology is to the detritus of culture buried in the ground beneath our feet, art history is to the art at the South African National Gallery. Both disciplines constructed a new field integral to ideas of colonial culture. Where archaeology was the scientific, art was the humanistic. Through both these disciplines the colonials were consciously making the country their own and instilling ideas of western progress and improvement. Historian Saul Dubow (2006) shows in his study of archaeology in Cape Town that both the fields of art and archaeology were part of a burgeoning number of fields that included amateurs and professionals emerging in the area in the mid 1850's. Dubow's study of the *Cape Monthly Magazine* shows that Cape Town's intelligentsia took care to formulate their ideas to fit universal western schemes of knowledge. This was a knowledge *about* Africans, Africans as specimens and Africans as others. As this intellectual group spoke with authority about the natural history of the city, identified material remains or painted the landscape, they bypassed the prior ownership of rights of Africans while demanding the



authority of their own colonial citizenship in a broader British colonial world (Dubow, 2006:4).

Nick Shepherd's book *The Mirror in the Ground* (2015) shows parallels between art history and archaeology as an emerging discipline during the 1930's and uses Mignolo's (2013) ideas of border thinking. Shepherd shows that although key archaeologists were white, they relied almost entirely on 'native' labour to establish the discipline (Shepherd, 2015:35). By examining various photographs of archaeological digs, Shepherd shows how entangled the lives of the earliest practitioners of the discipline were with those alongside whom they laboured. With a special interest in the 'promiscuous' quality of the photograph Shepherd examines the unintended contents within the photographic frame, namely the images and people unknowingly captured there, the shadows and the depths in which the unnamed and nameless dwelled. In this way, he encounters the unnamed workmen.

They are figures, often out of focus, often cut off in the frame, edging on shadows while working with the iconographic tools of the trade; the trowel, the sieve, and the hand brush. Shepherd eventually 'excavates' a single name by painstakingly studying site reports, field notebooks, and personal and professional correspondences. Adam Windwaai emerges as one of these invisible figures. This tedious and time-consuming exercise of sieving through numerous historical records demonstrates the efficacy and function of elision in our records with their claims of accurately scientific truth, where site reports reflect little more than the lack of human agency. Human agency refers to the will and actions of an autonomous individual. But this exercise, for Shepherd, shows that,

when the hand that holds the trowel is black, it is as though the holes dig themselves, and artefacts are removed, labelled and transported without human agency. (Shepherd, 2015:41)

Shepherd notes that South African archaeology is especially incongruous since it is centrally about black people and their past while being completely indifferent

toward the African present. In this way the past is objectified, properly distanced as conventional research methodologies require, and therefore also sterilised to make it free from contestation. The past is seen as a blank canvas waiting to be reconstructed through white scientific endeavour.

In a similar way to those old photographs, the South African National Gallery holds the voices of actors and artists long gone, it holds the traces of pigments of paintings that moved across its walls, positioned by unseen hands. It tells of sculptures smelling of wood, rubber, wax and stone, hauled over its polished floors by numerous nameless hands. It tells of the moving of display cases, the securing of accession numbers and descriptions by unknown people. It also carries the traces of this untold history deep into its foundations. It is an institution, like so many in South Africa, that allegedly was created and maintained through an invisible force: that of subjection and surrender. This is the force of sustained black labour. People of colour shining the surfaces, making them whiter than white, doing the heavy lifting, the moving, the polishing, and the cleaning. It is an irony that an institution that defined itself as intrinsically white was sustained by the labours of black people.

### **1.10 Conclusion**

My conclusion takes the form of questions that shape further investigations and reflection. Considering the discussions above, I draw on black feminist theory, postcolonial theory, and decolonial thinking to both frame and develop the thesis. Instead of inquiring into the ‘what’ of those dynamics that shaped the South African National Gallery, I turn now to ‘how’ the institution tracked its pathways.

- How has the South African National Gallery become a space of difference?
- How was the museum part of a larger project of South African statecraft and the construction of knowledge?
- How have various groups been imagined through exclusion at the museum?

- How did the museum construct and maintain exclusion?
- How and why have alternative voices been inserted into the dominant narrative over time?

## Chapter Two

### *Shaping a Field of Contention at the South African National Gallery*

(1895–1947)<sup>7</sup>



Figure 9: *The South African National Gallery*, 2014.

#### 2.1 Introduction

Few institutions of South African visual culture demonstrate shifting patterns of officially sanctioned artistic bias more articulately than the South African National Gallery (Figure 9). Its very name provokes impressions of the nation bound up with the ideological construction of art. However, along with the construction of meaning came the processes by which meaning was made. But the construction of coherent meaning was nowhere near as stable, constant, and authoritative as the National Gallery would have its audiences believe. Today, the museum gives the impression of an institution with a long and continuous history

---

<sup>7</sup> This chapter was published as: Lilla, Q. 2017. 'Classical impressions, modernist inspirations: shaping a field of contention at the South African National Gallery (1895–1947)' in Troelenberg, E. & Savivo, M. 2017. *Images of the art museum: connecting gaze and discourse in the history of museology*. Berlin: De Gruyter. 191–215.

of sober practices of collection, display, and scholarship.<sup>8</sup> Behind its façade, and throughout its history, however, various contingent factors intersected to construct this image. The early historical context positioned the museum as a British colonial institution, a replica of similar institutions in the motherland. On one hand, academic elites found that this context frustrated attempts to replicate the National Gallery, London, in a colonial outpost. But, on the other, the location also worked to uphold the authority of British-trained academics. This dynamic environment determined a continual negotiation of settler identities, where British conservative pre-eminence was increasingly undermined by a rising Afrikaner nationalism. These factors demonstrate how unpredictable and how reliant on place and time the institution was. The South African National Gallery is unique in that it is an art museum with a history of two separate colonial interventions. From 1910 to 1947 it was a British colonial institution, but from 1948 to 1994 it became part of a larger Afrikaner Nationalist cultural project.

By the early seventeenth century, the Cape of Good Hope had attracted attention from the English and the Dutch, both of whom had formed trading companies to challenge Portuguese domination of the lucrative trade route with Asia (Bickford-Smith, Van Heyningen & Worden, 1998:12). In 1795 Britain laid claim to the Cape as they were determined to prevent this strategic colony from falling to revolutionary France. In 1814 the Cape was established as a crown colony administered by a civilian governor based in Cape Town. From the 1830's onward, Cape Town became the capital of an expanding British colony, and by the 1840's Cape Town was a thriving British colonial city. By the 1850's libraries and scientific bodies emerged as the centres of high culture (Bickford-Smith et al., 1998:155). The South African Public Library, for example, acquired a new building in 1860 and shared this building with the South African Museum. While art, literature, and science were means of displaying British hegemony, Cape Town itself was by no means a racially homogenous city. Besides the British, indigenous

---

<sup>8</sup> Scholars such as Andrew Crampton (2003) have investigated the more recent history of the museum, with a particular reference to the idea of nation building in a democratic context. (Crampton, 2003:218–242).

Khoi, ex-slaves, 'free blacks', Dutch, German, Scottish, Irish, Indian, Chinese, and Malay were all groups that made up the population of the town (Bickford-Smith et al., 1998:86). The incorporation of the Cape into the empire of an industrialising Britain led to a more mobile but still impoverished labour force. Outrage at the British proclamation of the end of slavery and the subversion of the social order, as well as economic impoverishment led to the migration out of the colony of about fifteen thousand eastern Cape pastoralists of Dutch heritage in the 1830's. This event provided symbolic images crucial to the ethos of Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>9</sup> After the Afrikaner nationalists came into power in 1948, government institutions, such as the South African National Gallery, became part of a larger, Afrikaner nationalist project. The 1940's were therefore a period of great significance in the history of the South African National Gallery. This formative time profoundly shaped the ideological construction of the museum as well as exposing divisions amongst its interest groups. Not only did this period coincide with a critical political change culminating in the dawning of apartheid, but it was also defined by a vast and controversial sale of art from the permanent collection. It was a time when the imperial legacy of the museum was questioned, when audiences started debating the views of the director, and when organisational structures were formally scrutinised. As a colonial venture, with an imported form and a function that encouraged distinction and differentiation, the political and social contexts impacted on the institution in profound ways. Yet the

---

<sup>9</sup> Afrikaner nationalism has a long and complex history. As a political ideology, it created its own mythology, symbolism, and history that emphasised the experience of the volk. According to this triumphalist history, which unified the experiences of Afrikaners, it originated from the aforementioned act of trekking away from British domination, surviving hostile attacks from Africans in the interior, defending themselves against the British in the 1870's, suffering in the British concentration camps, rebelling against South African support for the British cause in the First World War, triumphing in the 1920's when Afrikaans was made an official language alongside English, and finally winning the election of 1948. The ultimate achievement was breaking with the Commonwealth and establishing a republic in 1961. There was much diversity in the experiences of Afrikaners of different regions and classes, and the notion of Afrikaner nationalism had to be consciously forged. Culture was used, in various forms, in a conscious attempt to cultivate an Afrikaner identity. The Afrikaans language, for example, was developed as distinct from Dutch to stress the common heritage of all Afrikaners. In 1929 the Federasie van Afrikanse Kultuurverenigings (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations) was established by a secret society, the Afrikaner Broederbond (Brotherhood), who worked toward disseminating a separate Afrikaner identity (Worden, 1994:87).

museum related to its environment in a far more complex way than by simply responding to a new political dispensation. It also responded to professional communities, to its audiences, to collectors, and to funders. This chapter explores the inventive construction of the South African National Gallery from its origins to the early years of its establishment. It looks at a large gift of plaster casts that positioned the museum as part of an imperial project and examines how this fed into a larger part of the 'aesthetics of Union' (Merrington, 1995:643–657). The Second World War caused a frisson at the museum, both through the provocative rhetoric used by stakeholders and by the sale of art works from the permanent collection. The fact that a collection of British sporting paintings were used by the museum to smooth over public discontent did not help the image it sought to promote as an art museum for the nation. The conflict of the old, manifested in the aesthetics of Union, and the new, manifested in an increasing awareness of modernism, shows that the construction of a national identity through the museum was a fraught endeavour. This tension originated from how different interests groups perceived the museum, and how they considered what its function should be and the kind of art it should contain.

## **2.2 Origins and Background of a Colonial Art Museum (1895)**

The seeds of the South African National Gallery were sown with the formation of the South African Fine Arts Association in 1871 (Fairbairn, 1910:550). Abraham de Smit, a leading member of the association, Surveyor General of the Cape (1872–1889), and an amateur artist, mooted the idea of a gallery in an essay 'An Art Gallery for South Africa' in the same year (De Smit, 1871). In his article, De Smit sketched out the benefits of an aesthetic education. The association's main aim was to promote fine art, as well as to 'encourage and foster colonial art' in the Cape Colony, and many of its members were wealthy industrialists in the city (*Cape Monthly Magazine*, 1900:366). The group's chief activity was to collect funds, and it aimed to eventually establish a national collection of art in a permanent art gallery. The association's aims were also educational: in its early years it accumulated material for students including copies of paintings, books, a

few casts, and a small collection of original paintings (Cape Monthly Magazine, 1900:366). The first efforts to form a national collection were galvanised by the bequest of Thomas Butterworth Bayley in 1871.<sup>10</sup> This bequest was made up of forty-five paintings, mostly by European artists (Dolby, 1981:38). After the Bayley bequest, other notable bequests followed, which helped to establish a national collection.<sup>11</sup> By 1895, the South African Gallery was formally established with the passing of the South African Gallery Act (No. 20 of 1895).<sup>12</sup>

### 2.3 Classical Casts for the Colony (1908)

Art historian Anna Tietze's 1998 article concerning the gift of classical casts by Alfred Beit in 1908 sheds some light on the emerging museum and an early division over the type of art deserving to be in the museum (Tietze, 1998: 70–90). In his essay of 1871, Abraham de Smit had suggested that plaster casts of ancient Greek and Roman statuary at a museum would satisfy a range of educational needs.<sup>13</sup> Closely associated with the British academies of fine art, cast drawing was offered at the academies as the prime method of teaching drawing. For the new museum, besides having an aura of classical

---

<sup>10</sup> Bayley 'bequeathed to the trustees the amount of £500, and the greater part of his excellent collection of Paintings to be made over to the South African Fine Art Association, if within eighteen months a further sum of £1,500 should have been raised for the erection of a suitable building, and should the Association still merit the confidence of the public.' (Cape Monthly Magazine, 1900:366)

<sup>11</sup> 'From 1880 the collection grew rapidly due to grants received from the government as well as be-quests made by wealthy colonials.' (Select and Summary Guide to the Permanent Collection Excluding Prints and Drawings, 1958:13)

<sup>12</sup> 'The collection of paintings and drawings, and other works of art, including art literature to the value of about £3000 and the immovable property in New Street belonging to the South African Fine Arts Association, were transferred to the government by voluntary gift of the Association in 1895.' (The Cape Town Guide, 1910:148)

<sup>13</sup> The exact composition and provenance of the Beit gift is unclear. De Smit however, mentions that casts could be bought cheaply from 'respectable dealers' in England and given the close association with the British art world it is probable that they were bought from there. De Smit makes mention of free standing statuary, such as the Venus De Medici, the Dying Gladiator, the Laocoon as well as friezes. A description of the collection by a commentator looking back from 1946, notes that the nudity of the gladiators, athletes, gods and goddesses caused the curator to keep them locked behind closed doors which he opened only to select art students (Tietze, 1998:86).



sophistication, casts had the added advantage of being cheap and easy to acquire.<sup>14</sup>

By 1895, however, a fledgling collection policy was already forming at the National Gallery (Tietze, 1998:75). Discussion at the trustees' meetings resulted in a consensus view on contemporary art and an anti-classicism that rejected De Smit's advocacy of the classical cast. The purchases that followed were of British art of the present or recent past, reflecting the perceived tastes in the colony (Tietze, 1998:75). Contemporary art seemed consistent with ideas of industrial progress in the prosperous colony and concurred with the appealing notion of the self-made man making his fortune in a country rich with possibility. Plaster casts, in contrast, were perceived as elitist and backward-looking, hearkening back toward entrenched class distinctions in Britain that were felt to have little bearing in the colony. This tension between the old and the new would have lasting reverberations throughout the history of the museum.

It is interesting then, that in this unsympathetic context a gift of plaster casts was made at all. According to Tietze, the motivating factor behind the gift had more to do with self-interested ambition than with aesthetic considerations. Powerful colonial industrialists, acting on the suggestion of Rudyard Kipling, rallied together to make the gift a reality.<sup>15</sup> Kipling was a close friend of Cecil John Rhodes, the mining magnate and British imperialist. Tietze suggests that the cast gift was inspired by Rhodes and Kipling's sense of South Africa as part of the British Empire, as well as their colonial ambitions (Tietze, 1998:75). In a period following the Anglo-Boer war, it was also important to demonstrate a proud British nationhood, symbolised by monuments of a glorious past. In this way, the casts made a connection between the British Empire and a generalised classical

---

<sup>14</sup> In the absence of an art museum De Smit visualised the casts in a public library, pointing to the educational and functional interest in art museums rather than the purely aesthetic (Tietze, 1998:75).

<sup>15</sup> The professional connection between the four men, Beit, Michell, Jameson, and Rhodes, was the British South Africa Company. It was established with the aim of spreading British colonial rule north-ward through Africa through the establishment of industries in the area (Tietze, 1998:75).

world. Classical statuary yoked the British Empire to empires past, signalling that the British were fit to rule.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, along with their promotion of classical architecture in the colony, classical casts served as markers of differentiation between the British and other national groups. The gift therefore worked more generally as a symbol of Britain's imperial presence in South Africa, and this political function was perhaps more significant, at least to Rhodes, Kipling, and their circle, than the casts' educational function.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to note, that although the lofty intention of the gift might have been clear to its benefactors, the arrival of the casts in Cape Town was met with official bungling. At the time the South African National Gallery was housed in a small annex of the South African Museum.<sup>18</sup> On a practical level there was simply not enough space to accommodate forty-six plaster casts weighing an estimated 450 tons. Two shipments of casts were therefore stored and partly displayed haphazardly in a room in the annex. One observer notes that 'works were crowded together going up the staircase with pictures of all sorts indiscriminately mixed up with plaster casts' (Stratford Report, 1947). It was only after the South African National Gallery was moved to a purpose-built building more than twenty years later that the casts were moved into the atrium the new building (Figure 10) (Stratford Report, 1947).

The Beit gift perhaps signalled an attempt, however haphazard, to cultivate civility in the colony, but it was a clearer marker of colonial grandiosity. The casts' reception in Cape Town and their display showed that their presence was ambiguous. Together with libraries and the South African Museum, spaces such as national art galleries were intended to cultivate the colonial government's

---

<sup>16</sup> Monuments such as the Cecil John Rhodes Monument on the slopes of Table Mountain in Cape Town opened in 1910. It reinforced the associations between the British colonists and the Classical world. A copy of a Greek temple, the monument claims an unchanged continuity between Greek culture as the fountainhead of civilization and the British Empire as the custodian of civility.

<sup>17</sup> According to Tietze, casts were an unavoidable part of museum life at this time, and the fact that they were copies did not detract from their educational value (Tietze, 1998:75).

<sup>18</sup> This 'annex' simply consisted of two rooms at the back of the South African Museum (Select and Summary Guide to the Permanent Collection Excluding Prints and Drawings, 1958:13).

concept of an ‘imagined’ British colonial city (Bickford-Smith et. Al, 1998:155). Beit’s gift was intended as a celebration of the supremacy of the British Empire. History shows that this fundamental message was not as clearly conveyed as the administration might have hoped. Factions at the museum saw contemporary art as more progressive and, on a practical level, the lack of a suitable space hindered a monumental display of the casts. What is of importance nonetheless is that the Beit gift shows that the South African National Gallery was part of a conscious movement toward the realisation of the image of the city as envisioned by the influential and wealthy colonial classes and empire builders. They hoped that, once established in the city, the museum would help to shape Cape Town into a place where British ideologies concerning culture and learning were made tangible. But the practical implementation of these ideas was not straightforward. In the first twenty years of their presence in Cape Town, the plaster casts appeared to be more a confusion of the spoils of war displayed in between the stuffed animals of the South African Museum than the grand inspirational gift envisioned by Kipling and his associates.



Figure 10: *Interior door of the South African National Gallery showing a cast from the Beit Collection. 1930.*

#### **2.4 The Aesthetics of Union and the South African National Gallery Opens (1910 to 1930)**

In 1910 the Union government came into power (Worden, 1998:157). The provinces of South Africa formally ruled by either British or Afrikaner republics were now governed by a sovereign central 'unified' parliament located in Cape Town. It was only after unification that the government finally allotted money for the building of the new art museum (Select and Summary Guide to the Permanent Collection, 1958:13).

The years after 1910 were a period of memorialisation for the fledgling nation. Bickford-Smith et al. suggest that key memorials in Cape Town were a symbolic tribute to the city's imperial heritage.<sup>19</sup> For many white South Africans, English, and Afrikaans, national identity was interwoven with a pride in their Cape heritage and an interest in preserving it. The preservation of Cape Town heritage took many forms.<sup>20</sup> It included the erection of monuments, the publication of historical documents, and the restoration of buildings (Bickford-Smith et al. 1998:76). Founded in 1905, the South African National Society was established to protect historical artefacts. Dorothea Fairbridge, founder of the society and prolific colonial author, saw the Western Cape as Mediterranean in aspiration rather than African, while Cape Dutch architecture represented European settlement. She saw the potential of this mixed heritage to act as a bridge between the British and the Afrikaner, creating a 'new ameliorative South African identity' (Bickford-Smith et al. 1998:76).

Peter Merrington (1995) proposes that Fairbridge and her circle, which included artists, architects, and writers (such as herself) developed an aesthetics of Union or a Cape Imperial aesthetics (Merrington, 1995:643). He suggests that Fairbridge's fascination with the Mediterranean was imaginatively adopted not only because of its climatic similarity to the Cape but more importantly because it afforded a strategic role for Britain's cultural focus in terms of Greco-Roman antiquity, Etruscan 'primitivism', and Egyptology. This allowed for a civilizational narrative for South Africa, including an array of images of the exotic particularly familiar to the European-informed gaze. Altogether, the image of Africa was

---

<sup>19</sup> One example was the newly erected monument to Cecil John Rhodes on the slopes of Table Mountain, which opened in 1912. Another was the statue of Jan van Riebeeck, commissioned by Rhodes, which was conceived as 'a statement about Europe's conquest of savage Africa.' It also served to shape a collective settler identity that was being forged through heritage practices of various kinds (Bickford-Smith et al., 1999:76).

<sup>20</sup> The South African National Society and the Van Riebeeck Society worked at preserving a local Cape Town heritage within the context of a new South African settler identity. The Van Riebeeck Society, established in 1918, also attempted to create a South African identity out of local Cape heritage through the publishing of historically significant South African manuscripts. Most of its early publications were associated with Dutch heritage in the Western Cape (Bickford-Smith et al., 1998:76).

thereby inserted into the perceptive framework of a heroic Mediterranean past narrative, including its orientalisising aspects. The Egyptian past also included the celebration of the myth of Rhodes's Cape to Cairo railway, which popularised Egyptology in Cape Town and was seen in architecture in the city, such as the Egyptian Building of the University of Cape Town (Merrington, 2001:323). Allegorical representations that drew on Greco-Roman or biblical themes were more common as was the imperial iconography of Britannia figures, classical goddesses, torchbearers, and the emphasis on the 'pageant' of history (Merrington, 1995:648). Merrington suggests that the mixture of historical myth and enthusiastic invention was used to construct a new national culture, or an imperial identity, by means of reinterpreting and appropriating the past (Merrington, 1995:648).

Building a new local Cape Town heritage project projected the aesthetics of Union. This would reinforce the British colonial legacy and show an inclination to shape a new collective white identity, which included the supremacy of both Afrikaners and British. As part of a broader network of cultural institutions, the South African National Gallery had the potential to become an arena for these efforts and for the aesthetics of Union rule.

In 1912 the South African National Gallery's board of trustees lobbied the government for funding for the new museum building, as well as for support for other amateur societies (Dolby, 1981: 42). In 1913 the government gave money for plans to be drawn up by the Public Works Department (Stratford Report, 1947:no pagination). A contract was entered into in 1914 for building the foundations of the museum (Stratford Report, 1947:no pagination). Building began that same year but stopped due to the start of the First World War (1914–1918). Construction was only resumed in 1924, and the museum was finally completed in 1930 (Figure 11). It was opened by the Earl of Athlone, Governor General of the Union of South Africa.





Figure 11: *The South African National Gallery c. 1930, Cape Town, South Africa.*



Figure 12: *The gardens of the South African National Gallery, 1930.*

The South African National Gallery was heralded in the Cape Times as South Africa's 'Royal Academy', recalling the seminal article of De Smit in 1871 (Cape Times, 1930). The building was described as a monumental artwork, essentially South African, but with European traces. A relief of a classical goddess, flanked by gesturing admirers, stands high in the parapet above its entrance, putti brace sandstone brackets sit above the door, and large stone urns, wreathed in garlands, sit balanced on either side of the building. Cape Dutch style windows flank the building's fluted Tuscan pillars, recalling Rudyard Kipling's sentiments in a letter of 1900 to architect Sir Herbert Baker that the use of two pillars signify strength and beauty as 'the two races, Dutch and English, rise side by side from a common and solid foundation' (Merrington, 1995:648).

As a displaced European form manifested in the vernacular, the art museum was a comfortable fit for the country's white minorities (Cape Times, 1930). Interior aspects of the museum further reinforced this. The carved wooden reliefs and doors tell the allegorical story of South Africa using biblical metaphor. In this way the entitlement of European settlement in South Africa was given a mythological significance as it was coupled with religious iconography. The contrast between the depiction of slaves and indigenous people on the one hand and white minorities on the other is clear. The select and summary guide to the permanent collection (1958) describes the iconography as: 'the wandering Jews on their way to South Africa', 'the Israelites building Egypt', and 'the daughter of Zion slain by the Romans'. The door panels however, represent the 'land of milk and honey' with indigenous people depicted as curiosities or as symbolic of material abundance: 'a native girl stands beside a maize plant', 'a Malay boy carries fish and grapes', and 'a native warrior leans on his shield' (Select and Summary Guide to the Permanent Collection, 1958). This iconography was later used as a sign of Afrikaner nationalism and this will be discussed in Chapter Three.

The museum's location in central Cape Town aligned it with other architectural displays of government, and it became an important part of the colonial cultural scene. Although smaller in scale than European national art museums,



it was built in the Public Gardens, close to the Parliament buildings, the South African Museum, and the South African Library. The spatial relationship between these buildings created a visual unity and a space of regulated public behaviour where existing racial and social divides could be ratified.

In 1932 the museum was incorporated as the South African National Gallery, a state-aided institution with a nine-member board of trustees (Dolby, 1981:42).

The directors of Michaelis, the University of Cape Town's School of Fine Art, were appointed as part-time honorary directors of the gallery. From 1930 to 1940 Professor John Wheatley held the position of honorary director (Dolby, 1981:42). The Depression years saw little development at the museum. In 1940 Professor Edward Roworth took over from Wheatley (South African National Gallery Annual Report, 1948/1949:1). In the light of later developments, it is important to note that the directorship was an honorary, not an official position. The aesthetics of union receded, and did not really gain ground at the museum while Roworth ushered in a conservative British stance.

## **2.5 Conservative rhetoric in the Cape Town art world (1940–1947)**

The period spanning the Second World War (1939–1945) was a turbulent time in Cape Town, which highlighted existing political divisions.<sup>21</sup> Loyalties associated with the war found resonances in the local art scene and brought about a crisis in the relationship between the art establishment and a group of artists called the New Group. The New Group were active in Cape Town from 1938 to 1954. Although they did not adhere to a specific style, many of the members either worked in a 'romantic realist' style or in a style that was influenced by Modern

---

<sup>21</sup> South Africa was not obliged to enter the war and fight on the side of Britain, and the debate over entry split the Fusion government. The Fusion government was a coalition between the South African Party (under Smuts who had British Sympathies) and the National Party (under Hertzog who represented Afrikaner interests and policies). Smuts had a particular concern for Europe and the threat of Hitler, while Hertzog called for neutrality. Herzog lost the war debate, and South Africa entered the war to fight on the side of Britain. Many Afrikaners opposed South Africa's support of the Allied forces while English-speaking Capetonians felt that the war reinforced imperial ties. Understandably, this division emphasised the tension caused by a growing Afrikaner nationalism (Worden, 1998:164).

European art movements such as Expressionism and Cubism. They aimed to raise the standard of South African art and, by organising exhibitions and sales, hoped to increase public awareness and develop a public understanding of Modern art. The New Group aimed to foster and encourage a uniquely South African art and were at odds with the art establishment (Julia Kukard, 1993:8). They were to become a considerable force in the South African art world, as they reduced the local resistance to innovation in art and broke the monopoly of traditional taste in the country.<sup>22</sup>

Sculptor and painter Lippy Lipshitz was a key figure in this group. Lipshitz studied art in Cape Town but rejected the academic discipline of plaster cast drawing. Instead he discovered Modern art in books and in local public libraries. The time he spent studying and working in Paris from 1928 to 1932 was influential in his development, and he came into direct contact with Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Constructivism. His professional career spanned six decades, and he later became known as one of the foremost sculptors and teachers of sculpture in South Africa (Arnott, 1969:18). When Lipshitz returned from Paris to Cape Town in 1938, however, he joined the New Group like other artists who returned from studying abroad and sought to find an alternative to the conservative art establishment in Cape Town. It was in this context that he spread the tenets of Modern art, which he felt embodied freedom and intellectual sophistication, with what some critics called a 'missionary zeal' (Arnott, 1969:18).

Edward Roworth was the strongest influence at the South African National Gallery at the time and represented the conservative faction of the art establishment.<sup>23</sup> Roworth was an academic at the Michaelis School of Fine Art

---

<sup>22</sup> This was according to Bruce Arnott, who became the Deputy Director of the South National Gallery in 1970 (Arnott, 1969).

<sup>23</sup> Roworth was born in 1880 in the English village of Heaton Mersey, Lancashire, and studied art at the Manchester Art Academy. He came to South Africa in 1902. He acknowledged the formative influence of his art training at the Slade and the exhibitions he saw as a youth in England. As early as 1910 he published an article on the national collection at the South African National Gallery. From 1940, after taking up the position as Director of the South African National Gallery, he published various articles on his background, influences, and ideological perspective on art (Roworth, 1946:12).

and an artist.<sup>24</sup> His tenure at the museum was marked by two critical events. His conservative and rigid views on Modern art led to an historic, public controversy, and secondly, and more importantly, he instigated unregulated sales from the permanent collection, which left a lasting void in the museum's holdings. Although it was not Modern art that was sold, the sales recalled the recent art purges in Germany.<sup>25</sup> For members of the New Group such as Lipshitz, Roworth's rhetoric drew clear battle lines, with parallels to official censorship of Modern art in Nazi Germany and the opening of the *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition on 30 June 1937 in Munich.

Throughout his career Roworth was very vocal about what constituted 'good' art. He wrote in local publications and spoke at public lectures. His parochial ideas would shape the national collection throughout his tenure. As early as 1910, Roworth wrote that art had to be beautiful and based on 'truth', which allowed it to give rise to pleasurable emotions (Roworth, 1910:8). Art should have formal, harmonious qualities such as line, colour, and perspective, through which the viewer could ascertain its worth. Art should be safely grounded in tradition and built on the legacy of the great masters (Roworth, 1910:8). The academic style of painting favoured by Roworth was easy on the eye and required little intellectual engagement by the viewer. Modern art was marked by a departure from these traditional values, and Roworth expressed his contempt for it early in his career. According to Roworth, art for art's sake was self-indulgent and backward, and could be seen 'only in the earliest ages of mankind' (Roworth, 1910: 8).

It is of interest that, at this time, the earliest examples of South African indigenous art, especially rock art and engravings, were treated as ethnographic specimens and housed in the South African Museum – the natural history museum. A similar classification existed in European institutions at the time. In

---

<sup>24</sup> Roworth was simultaneously Director of the South African National Gallery (1940–1949) and Dean of the University of Cape Town's art school, Michaelis (1937–1953) (Dolby, 1981:42).

<sup>25</sup> Artist Lippy Lipshitz complained that the museum appeared to be under the autocratic 'dictatorship' of Roworth (Lipshitz, 1940:20–24).

Britain and in Europe artefacts of indigenous people were collected first as curiosities and then as objects of ethnological interest. In the South African context this distinction helped to differentiate the colonizer from the colonised.<sup>26</sup> Aligned to this classification was the art/artefact distinction, which served to put western and non-western societies on a graded or hierarchical scale, where western art was perceived as spiritually rich and deserving of contemplation in the setting of the art museum (Duncan, 1995:5). Non-western artefacts, however, were best examined in museums of natural history as anthropological or ethnographic collections to be studied as scientific specimens (Duncan, 1995:5). Scientific systems of observation, description, and classification at the South African Museum, established in the mid-nineteenth century, were intended to convey a sense of ordered knowledge that was neutral and objective. However, in the South African context this process was implicated in reinforcing difference and helped to 'naturalise' racially based political authority (Davison, 1998:146).

It is not surprising that political authority was questioned during the Second World War. In this environment, when South African white identities were increasingly polarised towards the political right and the political left, Roworth delivered a public lecture in which he positioned national art as uniquely important and positioned himself as the authoritative voice of the establishment. Drawing strongly on the political context of the war, Roworth stated that national art was 'the most vital manifestation of the life of a nation' (Cape Times, 1940:3). He screened a dozen samples of French Modern art to illustrate his view of the type of art that degraded a nation and resulted from 'mental anarchy'. This 'intellectual chaos' was, according to Roworth, the direct result of the lack of a recognised standard of art and was produced by 'madmen' (Cape Times, 1940:3). Although Roworth's ideas reflected those held by the South African art establishment at the time, public opinion was by no means unanimous. In the

---

<sup>26</sup> This differentiation was formally institutionalised in the 1960's when the national ethnographic collection was divided along racial lines. White culture was represented at the South African Cultural History Museum, while black culture was coupled with natural history at the South African Museum (Davison, 1998:61).

wartime context emotions ran high, and much of the public took issue with Roworth's stance. For artists such as Lippy Lipshitz, supporting Modern art was a liberal political allegiance that expressed an anti-German sentiment. For Lipshitz, Modern art was 'tolerant and progressive' whereas the art Roworth and the Nazis advocated was 'shallow and unimaginative' (Lipshitz, 1940:24). According to Bruce Arnott (1969:22) in terms of the art-political struggle in Cape Town, and in the face of wartime animosity toward Nazism and the sympathy for the predicament of European Jews, Roworth made a grave tactical error. Lipshitz therefore won widespread sympathy and support for the cause of freedom in art in South Africa. He exposed the reactionary sympathies of Roworth and discredited the traditional attitudes he represented. This debate and as well as the resulting art sales caused a more liberal acceptance of experimental art in the Cape, and this trend was strengthened by returning South African servicemen, who had been exposed to a wider variety of art in Europe (Arnott, 1969:22).



Figure 13: Art sale from the South African National Gallery, 1947.

## 2.6 The Art Sales and the Commission of Enquiry (1944–1947)

The end of the Second World War was a low period for British imperialism, marked by a sense of imperial decline and an upsurge of Afrikaner Nationalism in South Africa. In the local Cape Town art scene there was an active public movement away from the conservative art establishment and toward the freedom and experimentation embodied by the New Group. Roworth's Nazi sympathies, expressed during the war, led to more critical public engagement with the institution.

Jillian Carman (2011:21) considers this period at the museum tragically pathetic, due to the 'monumental ineptness and bombastic arrogance' of Roworth. In a serious abuse of professional power, Roworth sold off parts of the earliest collections and so destroyed a valuable visual archive (Carman, 2011:21). Roworth seems to have acted almost alone, with no or little oversight from the board of trustees, in selling off 140 works of art between 1944 and 1947. Carman (2011:21) considers this pivotal event part of the widespread neglect and institutional mismanagement of art museums in the country at the time.<sup>27</sup> 1947 marked a critical turning point in the history of the South African National Gallery. A public outcry in the city's newspapers brought the sales to the attention of Parliament, and in an unprecedented step it appointed a Commission of Enquiry, headed by James Stratford, a British lawyer. The crisis was of such proportions that, along with the circumstances of the sales, the broader conditions at the museum were also investigated. What emerged from Stratford's report were not only details of the sales but also the more general functioning of a national art museum entrusted with public assets. Stratford recommended that the sale of art should only take place under exceptional circumstances and that the selection of work should not be left entirely to the director. However, the greatest weakness of the museum was a lack of clearly defined policy with respect to the aims and

---

<sup>27</sup> Carman suggests that there was a serious discrepancy between the South African Museum and the South African National Gallery. Whereas the former had become a respected centre of learning and scientific research, with sufficient funds for curation and preservation, art museums such as the South African National Gallery were of less interest to local and international visitors. The fact that good art was considered to be European and especially British also created a false premise that local art lacked the quality necessary for museum display (Carman, 2011: 23).

functions of an art museum (Stratford Report, 1947:5). One other aspect of the report was taken up forcefully by Afrikaner members of Parliament: that the museum's collections failed to represent a national identity inclusive of Afrikaners. This was, therefore, the first time the idea of a national art museum catering to a broader public was ever really considered in South Africa.<sup>28</sup> This was also a time when Afrikaner nationalism started to act as a forceful counter-narrative to British pre-eminence at the museum (Parliament of South Africa, 1947).<sup>29</sup>

The principal reason for selling the art works, in Roworth's opinion, was that they were not of sufficient merit to be hung in the museum. While writing about the early collection, Roworth had expressed the opinion that the collection contained canvases bequeathed in the years gone by that could be removed from the walls and be 'consigned to oblivion' (Roworth, 1910:9). While reiterating these views he stated that the visitor to the museum only noticed a few good works among the 'mass' of inferior paintings (Roworth, 1910:9). During the Stratford investigations, however, it emerged that, besides Roworth's personal motives, another reason for the sales was to make room for the Abe Bailey collection that was shortly to arrive at the museum (see below).

Starting in 1944, Roworth drew the attention of the trustees to a number of paintings that were stored in the basement, which in his opinion were not of sufficient merit to be hung in an art gallery (Stratford Report, 1947:2). He pointed out that the trustees were empowered by the State Aided Institutions Act of 1932 to sell any work that was not subject to a prohibition against

---

<sup>28</sup> Important to note, however, is that this was neither an egalitarian nor a democratic impulse, but it was one that would continue to privilege and reinforce white rule in South Africa. The exception was that Afrikaners would be included as part of the story of South African art at the museum (Parliament of South Africa, 1947).

<sup>29</sup> At the South African National Gallery, the Dutch-descended Afrikaners were presumed to be unable to identify with collections that were not seventeenth-century Dutch. This was a premise that issued from the British sector of Cape Town society. The first bequest of Dutch and Flemish seventeenth century paintings was made to the Union government in 1913 by a British citizen, Max Michaelis, and not someone of Dutch descent. Despite the nationality of the patron, it is noteworthy that this collection was not housed at the South African National Gallery but in a separate building, the Old Town House, which speaks to the deep divisions existing within the ranks of the European settlers at the time (Parliament of South Africa, 1947).



alienation. The trustees asked Roworth to make a personal selection of the paintings and arrange their sale. Roworth then negotiated the sale of forty seven paintings to Mr Monnickendam, a dealer in Johannesburg. In 1945 Roworth sold another sixteen paintings from the collection to another auctioneer, Mr Ter Beek, without consulting the trustees. Roworth considered that the resolution taken by the board the previous year gave him the necessary authority to conduct the sale without the authorisation of the trustees (Stratford Report, 1947:2). In 1946 Roworth himself bought a painting (South African National Gallery Annual Report 1946/1947: no pagination). The trustees were unaware of both these sales.

The Stratford Report makes mention that works of considerable value were included in these sales. One painting was attributed to Reynolds, while another was rumoured to be attributed to Rubens (Stratford Report, 1947:4). Following the sales the works were impossible to trace, so it was impossible to prove that they were the 'rubbish' Roworth professed them to be. Importantly, however, seven of the paintings sold to Monnickendam (in 1944) and two of those sold to Ter Beek (in 1945) came from the Michaelis collection (Stratford Report, 1947:4). Also included were two works from the 1871 Bayley bequest and one work from the South African Fine Arts Association. Although Roworth claimed that these facts could not be ascertained from the available records at the time of the sale, these sales were illegal under the act that Roworth himself quoted as grounds for the sales. As the works were never retrieved, their absence resulted in the breaking up of seminal collections (Stratford Report, 1947:4).

The largest sale took place in 1947 (Figure 13), when a collection of eighty-six oil paintings and fifty-five pastels and watercolours were sold by public auction, which finally brought the art sales at the museum into the public arena. The sale had its genesis in 1946 when Cecil Sibbett, chairman of the board of trustees, stated that at various times a gallery was obliged to accept works that were not considered to be suitable to hang on its walls and that consequently there were always 'some pictures in the basement' (Stratford Report, 1947:3).



Since Roworth had previously conducted a sale, it was agreed that he would decide which works should be sold and which could be donated to institutions in other municipalities that were trying to establish their own collections.<sup>30</sup> In January 1947, Roworth handed a report over to the trustees listing the works to be sold and, following their approval; he invited dealers to inspect the works. Roworth made special conditions attached to the purchase of the works: that they be cash on delivery and that the 'purchaser not advertise that the pictures emanated from the National Gallery' (Stratford Report, 1947:4).



Figure 14: *Art sale from the South African National Gallery, 1947.*

---

<sup>30</sup> It is unclear from the available documentation whether these donations were ever made.

After inspecting the work, a dealer named Lezard, trying to capitalise on the works' provenance, advised that the works be advertised as:

Being reluctantly disposed of under direct instructions from the trustees of the National Gallery in order to make room for the huge collection of pictures bequeathed by the late Sir Abe Bailey. (Stratford Report, 1947: 3)

He also requested that the director sign slips and attach them to the back of unsigned paintings. The collection, however, went to the dealer Krook, who outbid Lezard, and bought the collection for twelve hundred pounds (Stratford Report, 1947:5).

Following the sales, a public outcry had been raised because it was feared that the works had been carelessly 'thrown on the market and that many of them had a far greater value than was first imagined' (Stratford Report, 1947:6). The collection auctioned by Krook eventually fetched the sum of 5,227 pounds, giving the dealer a handsome profit. The South African Fine Arts Association was outraged, since paintings bequeathed by its members had been amongst those sold. Cape Town's City Council suspended its annual grant due to the controversy, which amounted to a quarter of the museum's annual funds (South African National Gallery Annual Report, 1947/1948:no pagination).

The Stratford Commission found that the museum had sold a total of 140 paintings at public auctions and through private sales, all at very low prices (South African National Gallery Annual Report, 1947/1948:2). At least forty South African paintings were sold; including artists who were key to the western tradition of South African art.<sup>31</sup> The sales had major financial ramifications for the museum. Not only did the museum have to spend large sums of money attempting to retrieve sold works, but only twenty-five works were retrieved, and at much higher prices than they were sold for. Given that

---

<sup>31</sup> This included works by J. E. A Volschenk, Frans Oeder, Robert Gwelo Goodman, Jan Juta, and Gregoire Boonzaier (Carman, 2011:21).

the Cape Town City Council also withdrew its funding, the sale plunged the museum into financial crisis.

The primary reason for the sale, in Stratford's view, was a lack of funds. Stratford recommended that the sale of art works should only take place under exceptional circumstances and that the selection of works should not be left entirely to the director. The report proposed that the State increase the museum's annual allowance and also hire a full-time paid director and an assistant director (South African National Gallery Annual Report, 1947/1948:1). The full impact of the Stratford Report can only be fully understood in light of subsequent changes brought about at the museum. Since Stratford used European art museums as his benchmark, many of his recommendations were idealistic and ill-suited to a South African context, where funding had always been problematic. Understandably, however, the report's suggestion that South African art become the focus of the South African National Gallery was vigorously taken up by the new Nationalist administration.

While the Stratford Report does not explicitly blame any one person, it became clear that Roworth and board members had acted beyond their authority as custodians of a public institution. While no legal actions ensued, Roworth had resigned from his position as director of the museum by the end of 1947. Following Roworth's resignation, no works were to be sold from the collection under any circumstances – this policy was later refined and by the mid-1950's, the trustees had the right to refuse works not 'worthy' of having a place in the national collection (South African National Gallery Annual Report, 1959/1960:1).

Members of Parliament claimed that the sales were shrouded in secrecy, and they also criticised the low prices of the artworks, as well as Roworth's ideas on Modern art. The most emphatic criticism, however, came from Afrikaner Nationalist MP Brink who claimed that the museum was not a National Gallery but an 'Imperial Gallery' (Stratford Report, 1947:2). He noted that there were too

few South African works in the museum and that the bias was very strongly British. Brink declared that the greatest scandal was that South African art was sold to make room for the Bailey bequest (see below), which was imported from abroad and which had no appeal to South Africans. What was even more deplorable was that three rooms were being set aside for the bequest and South African works were being taken down or sold. The museum's strategy was a 'studious de-nationalisation' with the 'object of promoting Anglicisation'. With the inclusion of the three hundred paintings of the Bailey bequest, the museum would be made 'even more foreign in character' (Stratford Report, 1947:2).

Given the inflammatory nature of the aftermath of the sales, Parliament decided that there should be more direct government control at the museum. Following from Stratford's recommendations, a full-time museum professional was hired to take up the position of director, rather than an artist and academic. The new director was brought under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and had to abide by new government legislation.<sup>32</sup>

## **2.7 The Modern art debate revisited (1947)**

In a conscious effort to deflect attention from the report's critical findings and Parliamentary criticism of the museum's British imperial bias, an article appeared in the local press that again set the Cape Town art world ablaze. 'Against the Cult of the Ugly' was written by Cecil Sibbett, the Chairman of the board of trustees, and it reignited the debate on Modern art. As if echoing ideas from 1930's Nazi Germany, much like Roworth had done in his lecture of 1940, Sibbett reiterated that all Modern art was 'degenerate', produced by mad men incited by lunacy<sup>33</sup>.

---

<sup>32</sup> The museum was brought under the control of the Union Department of Education whereas previously it fell under the Department of Interior (South African National Gallery Annual Report, 1959/1960:1).

<sup>33</sup> Sibbett was part of Cape Town's elite as a successful businessman, and he was also actively involved in Cape Town civic life. He had strong British political affiliations having served under Rhodes after the First World War. Born in Belfast, he immigrated to South Africa in 1897 and 'threw himself into the corporate life of his adopted country'. During the First World War he was appointed war correspondent for five South African newspapers. After the war he was appointed assistant political secretary under Rhodes. In 1927 he retired and took up various positions in civic affairs. He was chairman of the 1820s Settlers' Association, a Trustee of the

'Against the Cult of the Ugly' was first published in *The Outspan* in March 1947, then circulated privately among Members of Parliament and artists, and republished in the *Cape Times* on 29 September 1947. The article criticised Modern art as 'debased', 'degenerate', and 'debauched'<sup>34</sup> Sibbett supported Roworth's views, especially regarding the kind of art 'deserving' to be in the museum. The high-handed style of the pair angered the art community and provoked criticism and inflammatory responses in the Cape Town press. Sibbett's article also echoed many of the sentiments of Roworth's controversial public lecture on Modern art of 1940 (*Cape Times*, 1940:7). Sibbett declared that all cultural forms had been debased by the 'cult of the ugly', which he defined as a modernist ideology sweeping the world. Sibbett declared that all Modern art forms (not only fine art) were debauched and decadent. He equated traditional values in art with the high ideals of religion, while Modern art was akin to 'primeval savagery' (Sibbett, 1947).

As an antidote to the destructive influence of modernist thought, Sibbett wrote that a sober collection of art was about to arrive at the museum – the Abe Bailey collection. According to Sibbett, the Bailey collection's British origins would bring culture and taste to the South African public. This collection was beautiful and uplifting, socially useful and would inspire the viewer to greater humanist aspirations (Sibbett, 1947). Like Roworth, Sibbett was sympathetic to the banning of Modern art in Nazi Germany, some of which he saw on exhibition in London

---

South African Museum and a Trustee of the South African Library. Sibbett was on the South African National Gallery's Board of Trustees throughout the 1940's. In 1947 he succeeded Sir Carruthers Beattie and became chairman (*The Monitor*, 1947:18).

<sup>34</sup> In his article Sibbett was drawing on a long anti-modern art tradition that found its extreme expression in the Nazi art purges. The term 'degeneracy' was used early on. In 1893, Max Nordau published *Entartung* (Degeneracy), which declared all modern art to be pathological. New York newspapers picked up the phrase and described art exhibited at the Armory show in 1913 as degenerate. In the same year, art critics described the artist Kandinsky as 'insane', someone who could not be held responsible for his actions. In the 1920's, Nordau's theories of degeneracy were built on by a group of German art 'philosophers' who produced the outlines of the future Nazi art creed. Hinz describes their work as confused fulminations about art that were highly radicalised (1995:331).

and which prompted him to confess to sharing the Nazi antagonism to Modern art.<sup>35</sup>

Sibbett and Roworth's comments were not simply free-floating conservative declarations. These views were expressed by men wielding power in the art community. They controlled the country's national art museum and they were determined to fix the nation's art standards. But they were also troubled men whose power and reputations were threatened by the Stratford Commission of Enquiry. It was highly likely that Sibbett's article was intended to define the purpose of the South African National Gallery in this context, to safeguard its image as a serious institution, even to deflect attention away from the seriousness of the sales. Sibbett also clearly sought the support of friends in high places by handing over his article to members of Parliament.

## **2.8 Good, Decent, and Uplifting: The Bailey Collection (1947)**

'Against the Cult of the Ugly' implored the public to 'cultivate' its taste by visiting the South African National Gallery and viewing the paintings of the Bailey collection (Sibbett, 1947:no pagination). Sibbett's eager support of the Bailey collection emphasised that British art was still being privileged at the South African National Gallery in 1947, when Afrikaner nationalism was a rising political influence elsewhere.

The collection is a memorial to Bailey's particular passions: horses, fox hunting, and pheasant shooting.<sup>36</sup> As a collection, the works speak to the leisure interests

---

<sup>35</sup> 'I do not think that even my worst enemy would accuse me of being a Hitlerite. Well, I was one for a full hour one morning in London in 1938 at the 'Banned Art from Germany' exhibition. There was not a single picture that one could make head or tail of. It would not have made any difference how they were hung – upside down or sideways.' (Sibbett, 1947:no pagination)

<sup>36</sup> Abe Bailey was one of the chief mining magnates of the Witwatersrand. He was active in politics and, like Sibbett, had sympathy for Rhodes's ideals. He was a Member of Parliament from 1902 to 1908 and represented Krugersdorp in the first elections of the Transvaal Parliament. Bailey held the political view that common ground should be found between British and Afrikaner. To this end, he sponsored the Union Club movement and its journal, *The State*. This political ideal did not manifest in his collections. Bailey was unequivocally British in his artistic taste (Anna Tietze, 2001:2).

of a South African self-made mining magnate with a desire to imitate the British aristocracy and express the social mobility his wealth afforded him (Tietze, 2001:2). Art historian Anna Tietze has argued that Bailey thought his collection was suitable for South African audiences because the Cape was still orientated culturally towards the 'mother country' and was struggling to conceive of itself as part of a larger South Africa (Tietze, 2001:2). Contemporary Afrikaner politicians did not share this view. They felt that the presence of the collection in the national art museum only exacerbated the division between white South Africans. While commenting on the collection in Parliament, Nationalist MP Brink stated that 'English racing and fox hunting has no meaning, as far as we are concerned' (Parliament of South Africa, 1947).

The Abe Bailey collection remains the largest collection received by the South African National Gallery (Proud in Tietze, 2001:1). It contains over four hundred items, which include paintings (sporting and portraits) and prints. The sporting paintings make up the bulk of the collection. The paintings celebrate the rural sports of hunting, game shooting, horse racing, and horse drawn sport (Tietze 2001:1). Bailey's large collection of sporting paintings was one of the most extensive private collections of its kind.

By giving precedence to this collection, Sibbett suggested that British art was of the highest order and that the English-speaking South African public, far removed from the metropolis, would do well to cultivate their taste on even modest forms of British painting, rather than on local art. As art critic Linda Nochlin has written, the Abe Bailey collection is a,

...memento of Colonialism's contribution to the great Western tradition in South Africa. This group of tenth-rate fox hunting scenes is just a reminder that the Western tradition is not always so great. (Nochlin in Tietze, 2001:1)

Curator of painting and sculpture at the South African National Gallery, Hayden Proud, wrote in 2001 that when the Bailey collection arrived in 1947 it was 'greatly welcomed' (Proud in Tietze 2001:1). However, as seen in the Parliamentary debate



(1947) and newspaper reports (The Argus, 1947:13), the arrival of the collection was not unanimously welcomed in Cape Town. In a context of growing Afrikaner Nationalism it was considered incongruous with nationalist objectives, especially since its arrival was cited as a reason for the art sale of 1947 (Parliament of South Africa, 1947: no pagination). Besides its imperial connotations, it was also considered dull and repetitive. The art critic for The Argus haughtily observed that visitors to the Bailey collection were 'gloomy', and this was probably because 'racehorses as a subject for painting becomes rather tedious after the first 50-odd pictures' (The Argus, 1947:13).

## 2.9 Conclusion

The early educational roots of the South African National Gallery were eclipsed by a larger imperial project with the arrival of the Beit gift of plaster casts of classical statuary in 1908. The museum building opened in 1930 and was informed by an aesthetics of Union that reinforced this imperial project. Although early collection policies favoured contemporary British art, which aligned the colony with ideas of industrialisation and progress, the domineering figure of Edward Roworth attempted to impose his conservative ideas of grand masters on the collection. Roworth went as far as instigating a multitude of art sales from the collection to make room for more 'uplifting' art. The presence of dissident voices, however, such as Lippy Lipshitz from the New Group opposed Roworth's autocratic dominance and showed that a more experimental leaning was starting to be accepted in public discourse. The changing political context and the rise of Afrikaner nationalism pushed the museum to consider new ways to represent a 'national' art, inclusive of both factions of white settlers, British, and Afrikaners.

The Modern art debate, the art sales, and the arrival of the Abe Bailey Collection thrust the museum repeatedly into the limelight and revealed the large-scale public disapproval over its direction and activities. The fallout from these events, combined with a fast-changing political context, repositioned the institution in the decades to come. This period of change and controversy demonstrates the



unique position of the South African National Gallery at this time and its changing and evolving public image.

## Chapter Three

### *The power of public and private spaces: Remapping the city and the South African National Gallery (1949-1970's)*



Figure 15: *Collection of Alfred Beit*, The South African National Gallery, 1953.

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter is about the construction of space during apartheid based on the desire of the state to instil dominance and control over the population and the ways in which the experiences of black people were systematically erased from official history. To catch a glimpse of the lives of people that were excluded, I look at the edges of Cape Town in the 1950's-60's. People of colour were the main inhabitants of the city and the edges were much wider, and more fully inhabited than the small white centre. Virulent state aggression intended to keep most people away from the centre and after 1948 the state began forcibly removing black people from designated areas that were declared 'whites only'.

Understanding the South African National Gallery is one way to understand the status quo of Cape Town and the racial construction of the city. At the museum, the apartheid order was accommodated but in the surrounding city state dominance was more ruthless and it had far more serious and wide-ranging implications. Forced removals tore communities apart and lifted individuals out of the only homes they had ever known. In this chapter I will show how, for black South Africans under apartheid, the antithesis of the alien and exclusive space of the museum was the home. If the art museum is where the state plays out its functions, policies, and agendas of alienation, the home is where the excluded subject is present. I will compare the restricted spaces of the museum with the organic spaces of the home, specifically of those reconfigured by apartheid. The Group Areas Act of 1955 realised the policy of separate development, where racial groups developed 'separately but equally'.<sup>37</sup> Following the instatement of the act, areas around the Cape Peninsula and around the country were declared white.

My own family was removed from Harfield Village, Claremont in the 1960's. At the same time District Six, a few kilometres from the South African National Gallery, was declared a white area. District Six was culturally vibrant and racially heterogeneous and for those very reasons was an anathema to the apartheid state. In a small attempt to talk back to the regime of the past that continues to have bearing on the present, I look back at photographs of people that the state sought to ignore. The family photographs of this time, often carried close to the heart, creased and torn, speak of the spirit of individuals who were determined to survive. In 2002-2005 I worked at the District Six Museum, first as a researcher and later as an extra hand, helping where I was needed. I came to realise the power of the voice as well as the power of personal space. In contrast to the South African National Gallery, which was part of a project that sought to create a sanitised city, cut off from the normal chaos of life, the District Six Museum attempted to give a voice to people who were excluded from the apartheid city.

---

<sup>37</sup> This was a sick irony of 'equal' development. If it ever were a sincere intention of the state to realise equal development, history clearly shows that the state failed miserably to do so.

Founded in 1994, the museum attempted to create a space for excluded voices, making them heard through exhibition processes. I begin this chapter by focusing on the potent centre of white culture at the South African National Gallery. I consider how the District Six Museum project sought to make audible those dormant voices that were silenced during apartheid.

The two institutions, the South African National Gallery, and the District Six Museum, have very different histories. The former was established in 1895 through an Act of Parliament. It originated under the auspices of the South African Fine Arts Association, which was made up of white English speaking amateur artists intending to promote fine arts in the Cape Colony (Fairbairn, 1910: 550). The District Six Museum originated out of an impetus to preserve the memory of the inner-city area known as District Six. This area had witnessed the forced removals of 66,000 people during apartheid. Former residents, academics, artists, and activists gathered to realise the museum but also, and importantly so, to ‘mobilise the masses of ex-residents and their descendants into a movement of land restitution, community development, and political consciousness’ (Rassool in Prosalendis & Rassool, 2001:viii). The two museums are therefore mirrors of their time and its divergent forces. While the South African National Gallery assumes the burden of its colonial past, the District Six Museum had the unusual privilege of starting fresh on the right side of history. The District Six Museum came into being as a reaction against apartheid and the South African National Gallery was entrenched within the apartheid regime as a visible manifestation thereof.

### **3.2 Eliding blackness: The South African National Gallery (1950’s)**

Racial hierarchies were present from the beginnings of settlement at the Cape. European colonizers brought with them stereotypes and prejudices that did not amount to a racial ideology so much as an inherent ethnocentrism. These were activated into a social system of racial hierarchy by the struggle for control of resources against native

peoples, and by the labour systems, based on coercion, on which the colonizers came to depend. (Keegan, 1996:281)

There was a long-standing tradition of racism and difference in Cape Town and although there was a concomitant white liberal tradition, it did not translate into alternative notions of racial difference. Therefore, although racism in Cape Town was not formalised as state legislation before 1948, it was visible in daily life and had close associations with the struggle for resources. The apartheid state began its existence in a country well divided across racial lines and they worked to entrench and refine a system of economic racism. During the 1950's and 1960's, the state showed an interest in the South African National Gallery. Imposing Afrikaner nationalism on the museum need not have been difficult but for the more liberal white voices at the museum, which included the British-born liberal director. The liberal voices were eventually subsumed by the more conservative faction, who made up a significant portion of the board of trustees. Through issuing exhibition guides and maps delineating the permanent exhibition the trustees communicated their ideas on art. These publications were placed at the entrance to the permanent exhibitions and explained the exhibition to visitors. Increased government spending also decreased autonomy for the director.<sup>38</sup> The museum space however was never envisioned as a space free from racial barriers. For both the liberal director and the conservative board, culture was white.

There were debates over the function of a national gallery amongst the museum's white stakeholders, namely English and Afrikaans speaking stakeholders. Afrikaners felt that it continued to be an Anglophile museum despite the advent of apartheid and that the museum neglected to include the story of their art. Alongside the various debates around the museum was the systematic introduction of apartheid across Cape Town and the country.

---

<sup>38</sup> The state allowance to the museum, increased to £11,214 in 1956/57 (South African National Gallery Annual Report 1956/57).

### 3.3 John Paris (1949-1963)

The Stratford Report (1947) was the product of a one-man enquiry into the illegal sales of paintings conducted by Edward Roworth at the museum. Following Edward Roworth's illegal sales (1944-1947) of art, a new director was appointed. Stratford proposed that the museum becomes professionalised, that it includes an educational function and develops its South African art holdings. The collections of the museum presented a political issue - most of the early collections were British and the institution was accused of being pro-British by its Afrikaans speaking detractors. Nevertheless, it was a period of increased professionalization under new director, John Paris.<sup>39</sup> There was also an increase in bureaucracy and state involvement in the museum under the guise of professionalization. British born Paris came from the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool and was experienced in 'modern methods of museum management' (South African National Gallery Annual Report 1948/1949:1). He intended to make the museum a 'driving force in the nation's cultural affairs' (Paris in Allen, 1950:5). Paris's aim at the start of his tenure was to encourage South African art, the presence of which he felt was sorely lacking in the national collection. He intended to show the development of South African art from Bushman rock art and engravings, which were to be exhibited in the open-air atrium, to works by contemporary artists (Figure 19).

Paris reorganised the permanent collections early on in his tenure. He also spoke to newspaper reporters about his plans for the museum (Paris, 1953:6). He felt that the gaps in the collection needed to be filled, that more funds were needed to purchase art and that the museum needed to extend itself beyond Cape Town through travelling exhibitions. Paris wanted the collections to fit with schemes based on chronology and provenance. He dedicated separate rooms at the museum to specific schools of painting. He also pushed for the inclusion of

---

<sup>39</sup> Professionalization, under Paris, meant creating committees to see to the functioning of the museum. This included education committees, acquisition committees and advisory committees, although the Board of Trustees retained the authority over purchases of art. He also established a library and a public lecture series. (South African National Gallery Annual Report 1959/60)

indigenous art at the museum. He believed that 'prehistoric and indigenous art' was produced by South Africa's first people and that all art started after this creative impulse (South African National Gallery Annual Report, 1951/52). Paris therefore established a new department of prehistoric and indigenous art. The categories for his display of the permanent collection started with 'Africana', which was topographic painting of South Africa. A 'Pioneer' section would include work by artists who influenced modern South African art. The 'Groups and Schools' sections would show contemporary trends. The final section would be 'Prehistoric, primitive and indigenous art', which shows the placement of black art as existing safely in the past (Cape Times, 1950). The exhibition that inaugurated the new department of prehistoric and indigenous art, was a collection of transcripts of rock art by artist Abbe Breuil. A newspaper article (1951) about the exhibition calls the images on display 'sweater girls of prehistoric times', drawing a bizarre comparison between the images of rock art to pin-up posters (The Argus, 1951:4).

### **3.4 Displaying whiteness: temporary and permanent exhibitions (1950's-1960's)**

The 1950-1960's are described by Tietze as a 'golden period' at the South African National Gallery (Tietze, 2011:170). There were a litany of impressive temporary exhibitions that showed the new direction of the museum. Loaned from wealthy British industrialists, some of whom who had received baronetcies for their loyalty to the British throne, these collections celebrated the capitalist imperatives behind the colonial project.



Figure 16: *Governor General of Union, opening the Robinson Collection of painting, Princess Labia sits beside him, 1959.*

These collections also show the adoration of royalty amongst the white English speaking population in Cape Town. The implied message of these large and impressive collections is that the white population had the right to rule. In 1950, Alfred Beit (son of Otto and nephew of the mining magnate Alfred Beit) lent his collection of Old Masters for a period of five years. The initial loan of forty-eight works was increased by another seventeen canvases in 1950. The collection remained at the Gallery until 1954. It contained paintings of the Dutch seventeenth century, and the Italian and British eighteenth century (South African National Gallery Annual Report, 1959/60).





Figure 17: *South African National Gallery and the Dutch art exhibition, 1953.*

The Van Riebeeck Festival of 1952 was another iteration of a collective white identity at the museum. The Netherlands and Britain sent works to the museum and this opened diplomatic contacts for the museum. However, the works exhibited were overwhelmingly by practicing white South African artists, a fact that Paris chose not to acknowledge when he referred to the exhibition in an article that lists the highlights of his directorship (Paris, 1962:9). In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, the president of the South African Association of Arts (SAAA), a state-sponsored body, gives insight into the political purposes of the exhibition:

Centenary celebrations call for a stocktaking of a nation's spiritual and material treasures, and on such an occasion the Fine Arts should be in the van. As the present exhibition is being held to celebrate the tercentenary of white civilisation in this country, it is perhaps not inappropriate to remind visitors of the fact that this civilisation did not really begin producing its own art of painting and of sculpture before the present century. (Bokhorst, 1952:4)

The loan by Peter Hughes, son-in-law of Sir Max and Lady Michaelis, was on exhibition from 1953 until 1954 and was comprised of a collection of modern works from the French and English school. Finally, there was the long loan of the prestigious Sir Joseph Robinson collection in 1959. Considered the most important event in the art and culture of South Africa, this exhibition was an Old Master collection comprising of 108 works. It was seen only twice before in public (South African National Gallery Annual Report, 1959/60). The Robinson collection included historical works of Italian, French, Flemish, Dutch, and British schools, and remained on show at the Gallery until it left for Europe in 1961 (Paris, 1962). This was a significant year because in 1961 South Africa became a Republic and left the Commonwealth. What followed was a period of increased and sustained global isolation for South Africa (Worden, 1994:107). The Robinson collection was particularly dear to Paris, and he wrote about its departure from the museum with uncharacteristic passion issuing appeals to the political dimension of a shared white heritage while pleading for the collection to remain at the museum.

How great a disaster it would be should the Robinson pictures, which are a kind of vocabulary of our European heritage, become lost to us! South African European culture is a very complex thing, something planted from other lands and crossed and counter crossed with local influences so that gradually like a plant, it takes the character of the soil...it has been enriched by a thousand national characteristics, but made one by the common heritage of Greek speculation, Roman logic, law and discipline, and yet again by the universal Christian Faith with its huge deposit of knowledge and experience... ultimately a nation is judged not by its politics but by its art. This collection figures out our European heritage, written out in the universal language of art for the world to read. (Paris, 1961:no pagination)

Considering that South Africa had just alienated itself from most of the world, in what Paris terms 'a moment of crisis in the history of South Africa', it is unremarkable for Paris, a British citizen to be writing in this way. He writes of the enduring ties the country had to Europe, and implies that the country would lose more than the grand Robinson collection if they stayed on their political course.

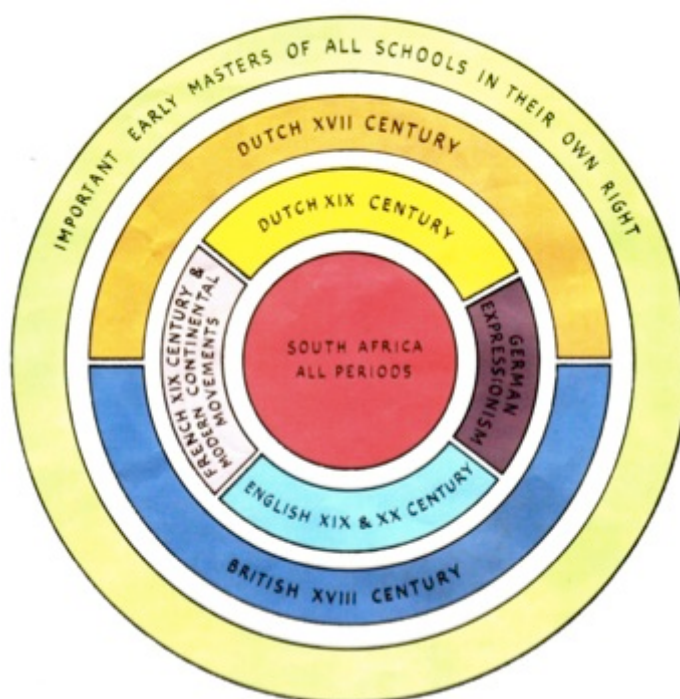


Figure 18: Colour chart illustrating layout of permanent collections in 1958, *Guidebook to the permanent collection*, 1958.

### 3.5 Founder Nations (1958)

By 1958, a shift occurred in museum practices, with a move from a focus on the historical sequence of the collection, to drawing direct links to artists' racial origins. The ideas of a unified white nation were represented and work was no longer collected to fill a gap in the collection but to give a better representation of 'founder countries' Holland, Germany, England, France and Italy. The museum was especially closed off to black South Africans now and it was a time when whiteness in the guise of South African-ness was made visible. At the museum, the art of white South Africa was exhibited as showing an uninterrupted line from European ancestors, art was moved to various exhibition spaces in the museum to reinforce white artist's ancestry.

A guide book to the permanent exhibition was accompanied by a colour chart of 1958 that explained the exhibition (Figure 18). It is important to note that it was

the first time the board of trustees wrote material for public consumption of this kind. The guide book does not mention an author unlike the colour chart where the trustees clearly mention their names. However, close to the beginning of the guidebook is a list for the names of the trustees and their professional affiliation. The director John Paris' name appears almost like an addendum at the end of the page. This makes me think that he was not responsible for the publication. It was the first time a clear nationalist agenda featured in the collection of art. In both publications, the Liberman Gallery is the centre of the museum and contains the South African collection. South African art was considered South African Modernism, which former director Roworth would have opposed.<sup>40</sup> The guide book discusses the decorative programme of the Liberman room at length because the authors felt that it contained a unique South African character.

Mentioned briefly in Chapter Two, the decorative program, represented black people as static and as a part of the land of 'milk and honey.' They are portrayed as resources and are identified with the wealth of the land. Settlers are portrayed as active and moving through the land and are depicted as the 'Wandering Jews'. The doors are described as follows:

The design of the doors reads in four panels, the land of milk and honey, Malay boys carrying fish and grapes; a native girl stands beside the maize plant, a native warrior leans on his shield. In the architraves are various figures depicting the Wandering Jews and their way to this land. They are the donors' people and the people of the sculptor. On the left, the Israelites are making bricks in Egypt. The temple of Jerusalem is in flames and the daughter of Zion is slain by the Romans. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain hawked round by hucksters to the farms. Taste takes time, but its growth is slow and sure-footed. (Select and summary guide to the permanent collection, 1958:4)

The main story is of European settlement told through the register of the story of Jews travelling to the promised land, South Africa. Aligned with European

---

<sup>40</sup> Roworth had previously acquired works by South African artists but they were mostly his students from the Michaelis School of Art (Tietze, A. 2011).

settlement ran the mythology of Afrikaners as God's chosen people. The decorative design on the Liberman doors demonstrates the way the apartheid project was imaginatively constructed. By drawing on biblical references the doors show a Christian theology as powerful in aiding and justifying a political cause that had its roots in racism and exclusionist tenets. In this sense, given biblical justification, the Afrikaner nation was believed to be divinely inspired and sacred. Of further importance is the often-repeated phrase of this period 'founder nations', referring to the origins of the white South African population. The head of the board of trustees, Honikman, made mention of the 'founder nations' in a leaflet that was meant to explain the permanent exhibition, it was also meant to position civilisation and art with the white population. Therefore, the term 'our art' refers to white art.

The story that the South African National Gallery is trying to tell relates South African painting and sculpture to the civilisation and culture of their founder nations, that is to say, to the source of their artistic inspirations. How far the development of South African art has been taken can be seen in the Liberman Gallery that in more than one sense is the centre for the display of the artistic achievements of our country. (Honikman, 1958:1)

In the above quote Honikman also mentions an important gallery, the Liberman Gallery (Figure 17). The Liberman Gallery is interesting because the gift of Hyman Liberman is in keeping with the tradition of Cape Liberalism, discussed below. Hyman Liberman was the mayor of Cape Town from 1904-1907. His gift was meant to be used for an architectural arch in the city centre, but it was considered difficult to construct so the money was redirected to other philanthropic causes. One such cause was the establishment of the Hyman Liberman Institute in District Six in 1934. It was a reading room and community centre and became a leading cultural centre in the area. Groups like the Eoan group met there to give elocution lessons, which expanded to the drama group the Liberman Players (Bickford-Smith et.al, 1999:84). Many musicians from District Six were taught at the institute. Jazz musician Abdullah Ibrahim learned

piano there. District Six Museum founder and musician Vincent Kolbe (2001) worked at the Hyman Liberman Institute as a librarian before the building was demolished during the forced removals drive of the Nationalist government. Kolbe was later transferred to the Bonteheuwel library, a grim desolate area on the Cape Flats designated for coloured people only.

Figure 19 is a photograph symbolising whiteness at the museum. It is an empty space, surrounded by Roman pillars that lies at the heart of the museum. In the shadows, framed by the pillars, just faintly visible in the dark doorway beyond, is an official looking bust on a pedestal. Even more faintly, through a left-hand pane, is the rock art Paris brought into the museum. It is the black person and artist pushed back into the inconceivable past. This photograph speaks to Paris's (1961) idea of the white South African National Museum that should stand united in keeping a collection of art bearing the dying traces of European royalty. The space stands as testament to the empty white space that the state created for white leisure and contemplation. It was to build a refined sense of a self that remained rooted in the European past. The image epitomises the lies people tell themselves to extort belief in what was not theirs to claim. Only a few meters away people were issued eviction notices and were torn from their homes and communities, flung to the outskirts of the city, their lives not only changed, but also fatally damaged forever, because a political regime dictated that only whites had the right to belong. The white emptiness of the space is filled with the heartache and knotted pain the dispossessed carry to this day.



Figure 19: *The atrium at the South African National Gallery, c1960.*

### 3.6 Forced removals and white collusion: Cape liberalism and early apartheid (1950's-1960's)

Politically, liberals upheld civil rights and the rule of law, the independence of the courts and freedom of speech, worship and the press, and their faith in parliamentary government: they saw the non-racial franchise as the keystone to the Cape system, they believed that the lower orders should be encouraged to uplift themselves by hard work, sobriety and duty. They believed that working for white employers both elevated and enriched, besides civilising the labourer...they belonged to their times and though many of their assumptions would be regarded as racist today, in a society so steeped in racist assumptions the liberals emerged as what they were: a conscientious and (within limits) humanitarian élite, intelligent and



high-minded, who acted both pragmatically and on principle. (Lewsen, 1983:34)

At the nub of the apartheid project was a particular politics of population: a project of social and economic engineering preoccupied with trying to reconfigure special ratios of blacks to whites and regulate the conditions of their association. (Posel, 2011:323)

Cape Town had a long political tradition of liberalism. The liberal tradition instituted itself from around 1828, reaching its political apex at the time of Union in 1910. The suggestions of liberalism continued well into the twentieth century. The liberal political legacy of Cape Town is important to mark because it helps to make sense of the ideological structures and conflicts that existed in the halls of power during the 1950's and 60's. There was a tension between the political beliefs of those who espoused apartheid, which was based on the ascendancy of Afrikaner Nationalism and Cape liberalism, both of which were based on the dominance of white enterprise tempered by paternalism towards the 'lower orders'. However, during the period under discussion a more cohesive white commonality was achieved. The shared interests of the white population came to override their differences in how they were perceived. The South African National Gallery became an arena for this struggle and mediation to play out.

Posel (2011) writes of the penetrative quality of the apartheid state during its early phase that had to be cultivated in various ways. While there was commitment to white supremacy, common ground had to be found with the white population at large for the apartheid project to be successful. The reformulation of physical space in the form of the Group Areas Act became central to state policies and was shown to be important for white economic well-being. In this way, apartheid showed itself as different from the Nazi regime, which was exterminationist, because in contrast, apartheid intended to capitalise on black labour. Through labour policies, apartheid, unlike the Nazi regime, meant instead to keep the black population under conditions of servitude and submission. Black labour was organised through powerful and rigorous state control supported by ideas of

separate development for the races. In keeping with the trend of exploiting black labour, but of also making the presence of blacks invisible to and separate from the white centre, a physical geographic distance or divide was created between the races. Maintaining the purity of white races both in geographical and genealogical terms was to reinforce 'European paramountcy' (Malan in Dubow, 2014:32). Although white liberal voices were eventually subsumed by apartheid statecraft, they maintained vocal opposition. Such opposition was evident in the parliamentary debate of 1957 on the instatement of apartheid at state-aided institutions, called 'cultural apartheid'. The Liberal Party opposed the Bill, which aimed to instate apartheid at museums, art museums, botanical gardens, and zoos (Dubow, 2014:32).

Margaret Ballinger was a founder and leader of the Liberal Party, she believed in common humanity, in common rights, and common loyalties (Lewsen, 1983:33). She spoke out against the cultural apartheid bill because it gave governing bodies the capacity to enforce the colour-bar at state run institutions, which she saw as an injustice (Cape Times, 1957:17). Ballinger's resistance is evident in her words,

It is perfectly true that people both here and overseas will say, and with justice, that we are reducing the opportunities for Africans to share cultural facilities which are the very basis of our civilisation and that our objective is the so-called maintenance of European civilisation. (Cape Times, 1957:17)

The debate continued and cultural institutions were eventually divided into 'Own' and 'Other'. The South African National Gallery remained open to all races, most likely because it did not have public facilities such as toilets, which would have required the 'whites only' designation (Patterson, 1953:128).

To strengthen its legislative muscle and to override opposition, the Nationalist government flooded the country with apartheid legislation during the early years of the apartheid regime's rule. As such, the foundations of the system of racial

division were firmly laid and in the process liberal voices were subsumed. Worden (1994) writes of early apartheid legislation that targeted the population at large (whites, coloureds, Indians and 'natives'). The black African population endured the worst of the most brutal laws. Conditions of residence, employment, education, intimacy, leisure, communal lives, and political affiliation were all governed by terms laid down by the apartheid regime. The 'Mixed Marriages Act' (1949) and 'Immorality Act' (1950) extended a ban on sexual contact between whites and all other South Africans. The 'Population Registration Act' (1950) enforced the classification of people into four racial categories: white, coloured, Indian, and native. This scheme was carried forward in every area of human activity and culminated in The Group Areas Act (1950) which extended the enforcement of geographical (territorial), social, and cultural apartheid to residential areas. Residential areas across South Africa were torn apart and tens of thousands of people were forcibly removed by the state. The first of these residential areas to go was Sophiatown in Johannesburg in 1955 and District Six in Cape Town followed soon after. The District Six removals lasted from 1966 to 1982.

The forced removals of the apartheid state had psychological and material effects that endure to the present day. State legislation with lasting effect on the psyche of the black population was the Bantu Education Act (1953) which brought black African schools under the Department of Native Affairs. Minister of Native Affairs, apartheid demagogue Hendrik Verwoerd, commented that previous educators of Africans had 'misled them by showing them the green pastures of European society in which they were not allowed to graze' (Verwoerd in Worden, 1994:96). This quote from Verwoerd shows that education was fundamental to ideas of apartheid and space. The 'pastures' of whites are set apart in an Arcadian paradise and blacks, likened to animals, were not to breach this physical distance. The project of apartheid worked to entrench the vision of white life as exalted and the regime realised this through the control of physical space. Blacks should not be within the proximity of whites because of the fear of miscegenation and of

corrupting the purity of the white race. Closeness to whites would lead them to forget their 'place' and lower social standing. This is what academic Kylie Thomas (2014b:283) means when she refers to the 'psychic damage' of apartheid and the lasting consequences of state dehumanisation on black people.

For the apartheid state, white society existed as entirely apart from the rest of the population, which would be forced into its own enclave by the force of state. This state project was not easy to accomplish for the Afrikaner Nationalist state without the support of English speakers. From the outset, Afrikaner nationalists enjoyed the support of whites more generally in advocating the ideals and ideologies of white supremacy. As apartheid became consolidated the National Party mobilised both whiteness and 'Afrikanerdom'. The party went on to win the 1961 election with a majority of votes for the first time, proving the English's partisanship and complicity in founding the tenets of apartheid. Therefore, the shift to a broader definition of white supremacy led to a more aggressive, authoritarian phase of policy making after 1961 (Posel, 2011:328). The last days of forced removals in District Six is captured in the photograph of a child drawing in the streets of the district. It shows that while creative spaces were imagined as white in the city, true creativity knew no territorial distinction.



Figure 20: Jansje Wissema, *Last days of District Six*. c.1970's.

### 3.7 The last days of District Six (1970's)

The street is her canvas. She has moved out of her house and onto the street. The peripheries are left behind and she has come into the centre of a free and open space to make her mark. The gloom of home became for her an indistinct memory best forgotten. The gaping hole of poverty was behind her, its empty mouth beckoning, but she has escaped it for a moment. Perhaps the street is safer than her house, perhaps the street is the only real place to be. The only place where she has the space to do what only she can. She draws on the spirit and life inside her - the spirit of life, the urgency of survival that becomes real

only through creativity. This urgency for creativity is innate, as necessary as breathing.

Children use creativity like a lifeline. Creativity keeps children afloat. We see in the picture a moment of creativity at its most raw - not controlled or directed. The child marks a sign that cannot be silenced. That drawing must get out. It contains an innate urgency but also a quieter pursuit, the silent movement of eye, heart and hand and the unobtrusive solitude of concentration. This is the antithesis of art on the walls of a monumental museum, sanitised, and to be admired from a distance. The value of the chalk drawing lies in the child's gestural action and in the transitory quality of the drawing in the street. It is shared freely with anyone who passes by and it is taken away, erased, by the wind.

The photographer Jansje Wissema captured an image not usually celebrated in photographs.<sup>41</sup> Wissema's photograph shows the magic of a child at play/work.<sup>42</sup> Soon the buildings around her would be flattened. The axis of her life would tumble and the ocean and mountains would give way to the desolate Cape Flats.

### **3.8 The District Six Museum**

The District Museum commemorates forced removals in Cape Town. I was involved with exhibitions at the District Six Museum during the early 2000's. I had just returned from studying in Pretoria and I yearned to work in an environment that was inclusive and dynamic. I wanted to be involved in the District Six project, because I had read about the alternative museum space that

---

<sup>41</sup> In the early 1970's photographer Jansje Wissema was commissioned by the Cape Provincial Institute of Architects to record the people, street life and buildings of District six, while demolitions were underway. Large sections of the district were still inhabited during this time. She built a close relationship with her subjects and captured interior living spaces with empathy and sensitivity. (Smith & Rassool, 2001:135)

<sup>42</sup> For an analysis of Wissema's photographic portraits of child artists and the way she captures subjectivities that dislodge the conventional ideas of people of colour under apartheid see: (Thomas, K. 2014b).

was being created, a space that would reconfigure traditional ideas of museums. I was especially interested in ideas of public ownership and participatory museum practices. My maternal uncle Shamil Jeppie had been involved in establishing the museum and had, together with Crain Soudien, edited a formative text on District Six (Jeppie & Soudien, 1990). He introduced me to Sandy Proselendis, director at the time, who handed me over to Tina Smith, one of the curators of the exhibition.



Figure 21: *The District Six Museum crew based at the Moravian Church District Six. Seen from the right are Menisha Collins, Tina Smith, Vivian Lalu and me, 2000.*

The museum was based at the Moravian Church in District Six. We used to look from our upstairs window out past the church gardens to the empty, ghostly wastelands and waving grasses of the flattened land of the formerly vibrant district. We did most of our work in that room, it was very small, only a landing. There were four of us but as more people came to volunteer they sat beside us. Everybody had to file out if one of us needed to use the toilet. Tina Smith, Vivian Lalu, Menisha Collins, and I were the constants. We did not have computers and did everything by hand. Vivian and I worked with words. Menisha sat next to the phone and had a neatly columned book with the names and contact details of residents of the Bloemhof Flats. She was compiling the names of the residents and hoped to host a reunion later that year. The Bloemhof Flats were a huge housing complex in District Six where Menisha had grown up. Vivian and I transcribed interviews or edited interviews that had already been transcribed. We took them home to type them up. I also interviewed ex-residents from areas in the peninsula, apart from District Six and searched through birth and death



registries of people who had experienced forced removals. I had not known the technicalities of forced removals or much about District Six. The experience of forced removals is ubiquitous amongst people of colour of a certain age in Cape Town. If your parents had not been forcibly removed, a close family member had.

What made District Six unique was that it was razed to the ground with all traces of human habitation flattened after having been declared white. Other areas that went through forced removals, such as Harfield Village in Claremont, did not undergo the same degree of destruction. My mother, Nazley and her family had been removed from Harfield Village in the 1960's and all the buildings she knew are still standing. The houses in the area were sold off cheaply to whites and have since been gentrified, which has pushed up property prices, forever eradicating the possibility of the original residents or their descendants living in the area again, because they still do not qualify as gentry and the financial connotations this class can claim. When my mother drove me through the area, she urgently wanted to explain how things were. She did not behave in an especially nostalgic way, but she was homesick, as if she had left something in a particular place yet struggled to recall where she had left it. The place was her childhood home and it was so unrecognisable that it caused a tragic confusion. She would show me her old house, with the big yard, where she had played tennis, and her old school. She would tell me how she used to be able to walk everywhere. Getting things right, placing things right in the present only showed that they were lost forever.

Looking at those narrow pavements and narrow streets I could imagine children playing outside, close to their homes. People often talk about walking everywhere in the past. Walking not only affirms the accessibility of places and things, it also gives the body and mind freedom. Restricting and controlling black people's movements were critical functions and a deliberate purpose of the apartheid state. When populations move along clearly designated byways they become more predictable, easier to control. The police state of apartheid wanted to control accessibility to control people.



Figure 22: *Nazley Jeppie in Harfield, Claremont, 1962.*

Although my mother does not dwell on pain I have always been able to tell that passing Harfield was for her an experience knotted with suppressed, unspent emotion. Undoubtedly, that knot has woven itself into her present. Forced removals is not something that people casually speak of, and perhaps that is so because people in Cape Town have learnt years ago to adapt and move on with their lives. Yet, to this day it remains an unresolved and painful issue for all those who have experienced it directly.

Many things from the apartheid past remain shrouded in shame. This shame is something I cannot understand, because it is underpinned by political agendas entirely out of the control of those individuals on the ground who had to suffer it.



Figure 23: Christmas family photograph taken in Cape Town, during Harfield days. On the photograph appear Nazley, Braim, and Phaldie Jeppie, c.1960's.

I like to think that people cherish good memories and forget bad ones because living in the past would make them feel like victims. Victims lack agency, people become faceless and nameless, and the people of forced removals resist victimhood entirely. Contrary to expressing defeat, people at the District Six Museum wrote things like: 'The indomitable human spirit will always prevail'. Good memories should remain untouched by the heavy hand of the law. Yet, the home is something so basic to understanding and forming a sense of self that when it is violated from the outside by the law, the damage to one's self-esteem is fatal. Siona O'Connell (2012) writes of family albums of the ex-residents of District Six, commenting on the subject matter of the albums that were donated to the District Six Museum. These images usually show moments of celebration and represent the donors' attempts to make sense of and control history.

As not every resident in District Six was part of a public anti-apartheid campaign, the photographic donations by ex-residents, showing lives being lived ordinarily, seems to serve the functioning of witnessing the fact they too were defiant - in their own particular ways. The images attest to the effort to live in carefully navigated spaces, displaying an understanding of where they could walk, dance, swim - and be. (O'Connell, 2012:132)

Tina Smith of the District Six Museum was a firebrand – she crackled with energy, intensity, and purpose. She had very little time for fawning or emotion, but I adored her. She was my first mentor and I watched her closely observing the way she pulled out notebooks and drawings and the way she made endless notes on stickies. The walls of the space became littered with them. The first time I accompanied Tina to the museum building in Buitenkant Street, the museum was a shell, but it was beautiful and had a reverential energy. It had been a church where political activists met. Upon entering the building, even Tina dropped her voice before pulling out sketches from her bags.

The *Digging Deeper* exhibition was a creative process and Tina was an artist. Jos Thorne, the other curator, was an architect and they worked very differently. Artist Peggy Delport, who had been involved with the District Six Museum from its very early days, directed. Things sometimes became quite heated between Peggy and Tina. At those times, I felt thankful that I worked with words. It was none the less a productive and energised working environment. Although the process was also creative for Jos, it was largely solitary. Tina was loud and bristled with energy. Most of the process on the ground, the hard labour, was overseen, managed, and produced by women. These were women with conviction and belief in the urgency to tell a hidden story. We used to tell each other when we stayed late and rolled up our sleeves toward the end, ‘it’s all women, all women’. We found strength in that belief and it brought us back the next day.



Figure 24: *The District Six Museum, Peggy Delport and me, 2000.*

The prevailing basis on which the museum was being run, was that it was an open space and inclusive – the antithesis of a state museum. These strategies extended to curating and research. The museum was meant to function as a ‘living space’. It was intended as a repository for stories, for memories, and for traces of the district. In an essay on the museum process, Peggy writes that:

I believe that the term ‘museum’ may have been evoked as something that suggested a solidity, a continuity and a permanence that could withstand even the force of the bulldozer and the power of a regime committed to the erasure of place and community... [The museum was to be] a place of memory, not a monument but a focus for the recovery and reconstruction of the social and historical existence of District Six. A major source of that remembering was obvious, the voices of people. (Delpont,2001:11)

It is interesting that a decade after Delpont’s essay was published, Siona O’Connell, who has parents and relatives who were forcibly removed from District Six, speaks critically of the exhibitions. Like Delpont, she has a lingering unease with the very idea of a museum, embedded as it is with ideas of exclusion in Cape Town (O’Connell, 2012:109). O’Connell feels that much like conventional museums the exhibitions and the District Six Museum are closed off and ‘fix’ troubling ideas in the past, while in fact they linger.

I have spent some time in the District Six Museum, I always leave with a set of lingering questions. Am I looking at something, or am I looking for something? In the exhibits I find an elusive glimpse of my story, identifying with it in very small measures, and this is fleeting, and it blurs into the generic experience of a ‘museum visit’...doesn’t the museum define polarities- those of the oppressed in the past, and those of spectators in the present? If so, how does this positioning assimilate larger questions of trauma, memory and citizenship, seeing as the institution is largely understood to play a crucial role in constituting the public memory of District Six... in its efforts to represent the past, has the museum become a metaphor for one neatly defined notion of suffering, and only the one? (O’Connell, 2012:109)

O'Connell's words make me wonder how such an enormous gulf can continue to exist between the museum's intentions and its more recent manifestation. It was not our intention to create a 'generic' museum experience. More importantly, the fact that the museum experience according to O'Connell only expresses a homogenous idea of suffering is especially troubling. The idea of exhibiting trauma and suffering is a very interesting idea and one that warrants careful consideration. I can mention two factors that contribute to the museum's dealing with these emotions. Firstly, the museum was based on a set of ideas, which had urgency and currency in the late 1980's. The main motivation was to remember the district and for ex-residents to have the chance to re-create the district through their voices, which could now become audible to all. It was conceived as a place for the recovery of memory, the by-line 'we will never forget' was repeated by ex-District Sixers over and over. So how does this project carry itself into the future when most of the original District Sixers have died and their children are physically removed from the area? It makes one wonder if the axis of excavation of the permanent exhibition *Digging Deeper* needs to consider the larger questions provoked by the implications of forced removals. Secondly, there has always been unresolved tension between the creativity of creating exhibitions and the formalities of running a museum (concerned as it is with collection, display, and preservation). The processes of museology, which the museum out of necessity adopted, are a set of practices that limit the way the museum operates and exists. These processes require that the museum expresses itself in a consistent way.

The District Six Museum experienced very deep processes of museumization through the stewardship of collections and the professionalization of all aspects of its museum work. (Minkley et al., 2017:198)

Despite such formal processes of adaptation, it does not mean that the initial impulses for establishing the museum need go unheeded. How could a museum fulfil its mandate as an anti-museum that is changeable and flexible, allowing for

conflicting voices while simultaneously having to conform to the restrictions of the more formal processes? I think that a museum need not exist as a sacred site, frozen in time, to achieve acknowledgement as being successful. The contrasts between the South African National Gallery and the District Six museum discussed above make this understanding clear.

### **3.9 Forced removals and looking at photographs**

Somewhere the stories of forced removals, the destruction of homes, and the silencing of voices stole their way into my heart. The words of the interviewees were compelling, of times in the past, of beautiful things, and of the inhumane things that happened to people under the apartheid Regime. The stories of forced removals show that the state shaped people's lives in fundamental ways.

A story that comes to mind is of twin sisters who worked at the Bauman's Biscuit factory in Salt River. In an interview, they told me that they had to work on different processing lines because one twin was dark skinned and likened to a choc crust biscuit and the other was light skinned and likened to a lemon crème. Colour seems to have been paramount to their identities: their skin colour determined their workstations in the factory as did the colour of the confectionary they could work with, as if colour alone – both that of their skins and of the biscuits – almost wholly defined who they were.

At the time the District Six Museum operations had permanently moved to Buitenkant Street and we had a communal glass box type office with a computer. People were always crammed-in, bleary eyed, and eating. Ciraj Rassool, public historian and academic helped me work on the Bauman's twins' interview. He laughed when he read it. He told me that this work was important and that I was making history. All our crazy stories were becoming historical gems, stories that in earlier times were unacknowledged or purposefully ignored.

Apart from capturing such voices through interviews, Tina and I looked at the photographic collections together. At Buitenkant Street the photographic



collection had a special room and we would pore over them. Tina loved those photos and she treated them with very special care, as if they were real remnants of families, and in a way, they were. The photographs made District Six come alive for me. The large prints of professional photographers captured something, but the small familial ones were special. Snapshots of families and friends, the kind that might be hung on walls, safely stored in cabinets or proudly displayed on mantelpieces. Or perhaps kept in a handbag. These were small photographs that had to be viewed from up close, demanding intimate scrutiny, because they contained the precious traces of lives lived and recorded. Despite often being out of focus, the past clung on to them, giving face to silenced voices.

The extent of the photographic archive of the District Six Museum is vast and shows that the medium of photography can be profoundly democratising. At a time when the state was attempting to penetrate the lives of black people in the city and when spaces of culture were becoming entrenched as white, black people were defining themselves on their own terms. Looking at those photographs made me realise that my family had similar photographs (Figure 25). Most of the families I knew had similar collections.



Figure 25: *My grandmother Aysie Jeppie, with Girlie, Braim, and baby Shamil in Surrey Street, Harfield Village, Claremont, c.1960's.*

Family photographs also capture a self-directed impulse to tell our own stories. We want to reflect and remember the beauty of our children, of how we looked in a beautiful dress, of how we lived in a house before we were told to leave. Home spaces are where people build a sense of self and cultivate their identity and under a domineering apartheid state, these spaces took on special significance. The images that are included in the District Six Museum make clear that the way in which people used photographs and other objects in their homes resisted the prescribed notions of home as dictated and determined by the state. When the law encroaches on the intimate world of the home something is desecrated. Taking control over the way we choose to be is represented in the photographs we take of ourselves, and it constitutes a form of quiet resistance. Besides family photographs, very few photographs exist of the interior spaces of homes that were destined to be destroyed during forced removals. Photographer Jansje Wissema captured a few such interiors in District Six. Historian Shamil Jeppie writes about homes in District Six as they were during the 1950's.



Figure 26: Jansje Wissema, *Interior*, District Six. 1970's.

Whatever property was occupied, it was immediately personalised, 'domesticated' and 'possessed' by its inhabitants. A new location was made to feel like home - perhaps a home the family had lived in before. Wedding photographs, personal memorabilia and ornaments would be put out on dressers or in display cabinets. Religious paintings or icons, a Christian cross or the framed Arabic calligraphy of the attributes of Allah called a rakam, would be placed high up on wall, especially near the front door. These images, or talismans prepared by the area's holy men or women and hidden away above the door would bless the space, keeping away the devil or bad jinn (spirits), and marking religious identity. (Jeppie, 1998:391)

The passageway in Figure 26 is narrow and tight but rakams, 'talismans', and pictures hang high on the walls against the eaves, speaking of the lives lived here. This image is in strong contrast to the image of the art museum in Figure 17. In that image, the space is empty, stripped of life. It is a dead space, a mausoleum to masterpieces. In Figure 26 the space is personalised by flowers and by the wrought iron furniture. The lace curtain beyond, shows that only a small part of the house is on display to the outside world. The girl in the jersey dress arrests me, her eyes carry a question, 'Can I help you?' She looks as though caught unawares, while speaking, not posing or trying to look her best. She is on her way to the door to see who has come to visit – someone with whom she is at ease, a welcomed and familiar guest. The house behind her is in shadow and indicates the part of the house that is closed off from public viewing. Perhaps she comes from the kitchen and its smell permeates her heavy jersey dress. Jeppie (1998) writes of the domicile as intimate and private but also as flexible, changeable, and unpredictable. Rooms had many uses, kitchens were used for cooking and eating but also as bathrooms. Entrances were sometimes used as bedrooms. The stoep would function as an outside space in the summer months and the house-as-home would flow outward and into the street. Achmat Dangor (1998) writes of the function of the stoep at his grandmother's house in Fordsburg in a similar way.



Figure 27: Achmat Dangor's grandmothers house in Fordsburg, *Johannesburg*. 1950.

I grew up in the 1950's, in a suburb called Fordsburg, located on the western edge of the city... The house itself had a front stoep that shaded the entrance and served to extend the living area. In warm climates, being able to relax 'outside' while still feeling held in the safe embrace of your property, lends a sense of spaciousness even to the humblest of homes. You stepped through the front door into the living room, a large space which the carpet divided neatly into two zones, sleeping areas: bathroom, toilet and kitchen to the left, bedrooms to the right. I don't mean to romanticise the architecture. This was a modest house: in size, construction and cost. Yet it provided a lifestyle that a working class family could afford. And its location within a 'community' of services made a difficult life bearable... one day a man in a grey suit came to the door and told my grandmother that she and her family had to move. She was a 'Malay' living in an 'Indian' group area. 'What's the difference?' she asked him. 'It's the law' he said. 'In any case, your house is a slum dwelling.' (Dangor, 1998: 359)

In District Six space was not organised or sanitised, it was unfixed and flexible. In the district, rooms would be reorganised and moved around to accommodate more people. This flexibility extended beyond the home. It was embodied in the fabric of the district, its sights and sounds, in the type of buildings, as well as in the heterogeneity of the people living there. District Six, also had a more sinister side. Alex La Guma (1968) writes of the district's side that sits uncomfortably with middle class respectability. La Guma's short story *A walk in the night* gives insight into the spaces on the margins of the romanticised version of District Six. The

tenements of the poor are where much of the action happens in La Guma's story. These were large blocks of one bedroom flats, usually housing entire families. La Guma's descriptions of spaces of decay and squalor speak not only of the degradation of place but of an entire people brought low through economic exclusion and the prevailing, systemic racism of the society in which they lived.



Figure 28: Jansje Wissema, *Interior, District Six*. 1970's.

On the floors of the tenements the grime collected quickly. A muddied sole of a shoe scuffed across the worn, splintery boards and left tiny embankments of dirt along the sides of the minute raised ridges of wood; or water was spilled or somebody urinated and left wet patches onto which the dust from the ceilings or the seams of clothes drifted and collected to leave dark patches as the moisture dried. A crumb fell or a drop of fat, and was ground underfoot, spread out to become a trap for the drifting dust that floated in invisible particles; the curve of a warped plank or the projections of a badly made joint; the rosettes and bas-reliefs of Victorian plaster-work; the mortar that became damp and spongy when the rains came and then contracting and cracking with heat; all formed little traps for the dust. And in the dampness deadly life formed in decay and bacteria and mould, and in the heat and airlessness the rot appeared too, so that the things which once were whole or new withered or putrefied and the smells of their decay and putrefaction pervaded the tenements of the poor. (La Guma, 1968: 32)

Besides being poor, the district was also an area constantly in flux. Woven into the discourses of sanitation and racism that outlined District Six, was the area being declared a slum or a black spot. As the most vibrant heartbeat of the city, it was also marked as an area that apartheid authorities especially needed to control. At a time of increased control of the population, District Six and areas like it represented flexibility in ways that were impossible to quantify.

District Six is a counterpoint to the South African National Gallery because it represents the underbelly of apartheid statecraft. The state wanted to eradicate the physicality of people of colour unless they would work at building white lives. At the same time, forced removals sought to crush the creativity of the people who lived in District Six – so many musicians, writers, artists, artisans, people who created beautiful home spaces. The eradication of District Six and other areas of forced removals in the city, represent a small but significant part of how the South African National Gallery and countless other state institutions came to exist the way they did. These institutions were vast and empty, reserved only for the leisure interests of the white minority. The labouring hands of people of colour that greased the machinery of apartheid were entirely absent. Difference did not only exist in racial terms, difference was constructed in ways that sought to eradicate all other manifestations of living.

### **3.10 Re-mapping Cape Town and the District Six Museum**

The history of forced removals, District Six and the District Six Museum have been well documented.<sup>43</sup> I am most interested in the way the museum realised

---

<sup>43</sup> See: Jeppie, S., & Soudien, C. (eds.). 1990. *The struggle for District Six: Past and Present*. Cape Town: Buchu Books.

Prosalendis, S. & Rassool, C., (eds.). 2001. *Recalling community in Cape Town: Creating and curating the District Six Museum*. Cape Town: District Six Museum.

Field, S. (ed.). 2001. *Lost communities, living memories: Remembering forced removals in Cape Town*. Cape Town: David Philip.

Rassool, C. 2006. Community museums, memory politics and social transformation in South Africa: histories, possibilities and limits in I. Karp et al. *Museum Frictions: Global Transformations/ Public Cultures*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Rassool, C. 2006. Making the District Six Museum in Cape Town, *Museum International*, 58 ( 229-

the potency of the voices of individuals to reimagine a physical space that was laden with emotion and senses of self. The city, through both forced removals and the South African National Gallery were reconfigured or 're-mapped' to accomplish political imperatives. The impetus behind this project was to eradicate parts of a narrative that did not fit with the white story as crafted by those in power. The project at the South African National Gallery intended to fix and to sustain an already divided city through the dictates and norms of apartheid.

The unintended inaugural exhibition of the District Six Museum was *Streets*, which in 1994 simulated the geography of the district. In the year of South Africa's first democratic elections the exhibition also intended to make visible physical and mental spaces that lay submerged during apartheid. The objects on display: the original street signs of the area, a large painted floor map, photographs, and memorabilia have become iconic symbols of the permanent exhibition and perhaps of forced removals more generally. The District Six Museum built offices with glass walls to reinforce the idea of a porous boundary, where producer and subject inform the exhibition process. Enduring ideas of privilege in museums are very hard to erase, even in a space such as the District Six Museum where there was a consciousness of working to overcome such divides. Private photographs of people of colour were capturing moments of agency that existed outside the ambit of the state, but the act of creating an empowering narrative is complex and bound to a broader history of museums in the city.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

The South African National Gallery worked hard in the 1950's and 60's to instil concrete ideas of white culture. Formal exhibitions at the South African National

---

30), 2006.



Gallery, where collections were reorganised and where exhibitions of great masters were revered and marked as significant to the nation-building enterprise, avoided expressions of black selves. The museum reconstituted itself as a white settler museum, catering to a combined white nationalism of English speakers and Afrikaners. Reimagined as bands of racial purity, the museum did not only disregard the existence of black inhabitants of the city, it annihilated them from the story of art. Blackness was imagined as anathema to white culture, although black labour was central to white economic progress. As District Six was undergoing ethnic cleansing, so too was the National Gallery. People of colour who were forcibly removed had to survive the brutality of the state as well as their dire economic conditions brought about by colonialism. They survived by defining who they were for themselves, in numerous ways. In their private spaces, they continued to display pictures of themselves and their homes as a way of remembering, but also as a way of nurturing and upholding a view of themselves and who they saw themselves to be despite the force of the law. A quiet resistance permeated the homes of the dispossessed as they proved that their spirits were not to be broken.

## Chapter Four

### *Inside and outside a divided white art world (1980's)*



Figure 29: David Goldblatt, *Senior Members of National Party at 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*. 1964.<sup>44</sup>

A parliament of crows celebrating the 50th anniversary of apartheid.

What kind of stern and misplaced celebration is this? The attendees are dressed as if for church, only the fringe and banner in the distance speak of frivolity, perhaps a party. Celebrating their political alliance, they look fierce and righteous. They are fierce and tenacious in their right to belong and to control. They are righteous because they believe that it is their God-given right. They belong by God-given right on that stage, lips drawn, fists clenched, staring into the distance or eyes dropped to the papers they hold. Tight inside the picture frame, chins lifted with heads at a righteous angle, they sit above an audience. They are a barricade, a chain of puffed-up human chests. They are entitled to

---

<sup>44</sup> Goldblatt's photographs were exhibited at the South African National Gallery in 1980/1981 in the exhibition 'South African Professional Photographers' (South African National Gallery Annual Report 1980/1981: no pagination).

determining what is right, because of their position of power. They hold entitlement close to their hearts with absolute belief in its moral gravitas and legitimacy. Their eyes are covered, dark glasses shade their more secret and nefarious intentions. Dark glasses and hats evoke disguises and costumes – marking the shape-shifting of the apartheid state. This image is part of the collection ‘Some Afrikaners Photographed’ by David Goldblatt. Goldblatt captures an event and also portrays complexity of human character. Perhaps this is the human face of apartheid. These people embody the ideology of apartheid and shows that it is not abstract. In it we witness the conviction of rightness, the tight certainty of belonging but also the tension of an unseen threat. The fact that the photograph was bought by the South African National Gallery in 1979 shows that it had relevance to a national collection of art as part of a political project. At a high point of apartheid in South Africa, it also shows that meaning is ambiguous. Meaning is created in the mind of the beholder, an ancient truth that the museum exploited at the time.

#### **4.1 Introduction: Cultural institutions and the state (1980’s)**

In the 1980’s the South African state used various cultural institutions to promote and manifest its ideology. Consolidating previous manifestations of apartheid, the Botha administration aimed to restructure society by combining political interests with broader business interests (Worden, 1994: 123). The apartheid ideology therefore emphasised free market enterprise in a bid to encourage shared aims with business support. In turn business supported government projects by investing large amounts of money and support in the arts. The Cape Town Triennials, for example, sponsored by Anton Rupert,<sup>45</sup> epitomised such collaboration between the South African National Gallery and the South African business world.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> South African entrepreneur and billionaire.

<sup>46</sup> According to my supervisor Elizabeth Gunter (2017) the situation at the South African National Gallery could be likened to the theatre where various tensions were played out amongst various actors. She noted that “The gallery chose to take an interesting and complex stance that served only to compromise its position as being complexly duplicitous. The gallery was part of broader

In the wake of a burgeoning capitalist enterprise the common threat to both business and state was the ‘insidious’ communist threat, arising from popular resistance and known as ‘the total onslaught’. Black Consciousness inspired by the writings of Steve Biko and other post-colonial authors emerged as a radical substitute to apartheid. The Black Consciousness movement realised that apartheid’s power lay in its ability to dehumanise and emasculate the ‘black man’. Restoring human dignity was therefore paramount to the movement’s mandate. One of the ways of restoring dignity was to promote respect for and understanding of what it meant to be black and to work actively towards arousing and sustaining such respect as not only political awareness, but also as political force that could challenge the status quo.

---

state apparatus of apartheid that gave birth to the gallery facilitating national exhibitions like the Triennials and other ‘international’ exhibitions. As such, the gallery had to contend with certain limitations and politically motivated restrictions, which it did by excluding from its acquisitions and exhibitions art and artists that undermined apartheid and were seen to be supporters of the purported ‘communist threat’ and ‘total onslaught’. Firstly, in its selection procedures, it maintained a strategic view that art should be neutral and pure. As a criterion for selection, this strategy veiled from some politically motivated artists the gallery’s state-mandated purposes that were meant to promote apartheid. The gallery’s political mandate was pushed to the sidelines to become either a hidden agenda or arguably to accomplish some progress towards becoming at least a less exclusive or at best an autonomous institution that would mirror the diverse society in which it existed. Yet, focusing on the neutrality and purity of art as criteria for recognition could also be used as an excuse for excluding politically motivated artists because although technically sound, their work could not be categorised as neutral and pure of political content. Yet another agenda appeared, arguably as a compromise to both sides and one that could be applied as circumstances demanded, however inconsistent its realization would prove to be. The fact that art could be evaluated academically in terms of its formal character helped decision makers to divert apartheid supporters’ attention away from more obvious concerns such as the fraught political messages implicit in some contemporary artists’ work, thereby pleasing both the state and a few select (white) artists by acquiring their work. The same strategy could be applied with the purpose to exclude artists without academic training, because their work would not comply with technical standards of skill. Such artists inevitably resorted under those categories of apartheid policies that deliberately excluded blacks from education and in particular from tertiary education and training in the visual arts. Such artists worked from the heart, their creativity mediated by disadvantage, poverty, and politically orchestrated exclusion from the right to education. If focusing on the formal aspects and neutrality of art as criteria for acknowledgement were intended as a form of compromise that could also possibly accommodate empathy with the excluded sectors of society, such compromise merely comprised trying to fool apartheid’s censorious supporters on the one hand by faking autonomy, which in turn was supposed to fool a culturally and racially diverse society on the other hand. Compromise is futile if it entails both autonomy theatre and complicity theatre – it becomes a sad tragedy of duplicity in which all are betrayed, including the institution itself.” (Gunter personal communication, 2017)

Black Consciousness was receptive to artistic expression, because it promoted developing a sense of self and this challenged the apartheid mind set. Artistic expression included art, poetry, prose and drama. Black Consciousness positioned artistic expression at the heart of the liberation movement while keenly encouraging political awareness (Dubow, 2014: 159). During the Botha era, the country witnessed its worst violence (Hopkins, 2003:289). The state utilised not only security and military forces but also the notorious brutal secret police and death squads. State censorship went a long way towards constricting the artistic expression emanating from all sectors. Artists working in opposition to the state in the liberation movement had to find alternative ways to disseminate their work. Police brutality and black unrest caused an increase of international condemnation, which resulted in increasing international economic sanctions and disinvestment.

Sanctions negatively affected the South African economy and South Africa strengthened ties with other pariah states, such as the military dictatorship of Chile under Pinochet. Art was used as a vehicle to communicate commonality, good will and understanding. South Africa sent work to the Valparaíso Biennial of art from 1979-1987 and Chile sent exhibitions to South Africa (Department National Education Annual Report, 1979:23). Art therefore served a diplomatic function and intended to show the world that South Africa could thrive without international support.

The dictatorial state of Chile shared striking similarities to the reign of terror designed by the apartheid state. Contravening the cultural Boycott as stipulated by the United Nations, the apartheid state wanted to show that it could still compete on a world stage, and be part of 'internationalism' despite widespread sanctions.<sup>47</sup> 'Internationalism' referred to the limited exposure South Africa had to the global community in the form of its 'friends'. The South African Association of Arts (SAAA) advised the state on all matters relating to art (Van

---

<sup>47</sup> 'Internationalism' was a constant preoccupation of director Raymond van Niekerk's.

Niekerk, 1979:46). They organised these exhibitions and in the case of the Valparaíso Biennial helped to judge them.

The SAAA in collaboration with the South African National Gallery also organised competitions, such as the art triennials in Cape Town. This competition had the aim of revitalising national art. The SAAA also had a long history of association with the museum.<sup>48</sup> In the 1980's five members of the Board of Trustees were appointed by the state (amounting to half the total board members) and two members from the SAAA. The South African National Gallery was part of the apparatus of state. It functioned alongside art competitions such as the Cape Town Triennial, which they fully facilitated, and they supported 'international' biennales hosted by dictatorial states, such as the Valparaíso Biennial in Chile. Like Chile, the apartheid state affirmed its supremacy physically through police brutality and intellectually through state censorship laws. These laws curtailed the freedom of expression in the arts. Censorship affected artists across race lines although it was more severe towards black artists.<sup>49</sup> Although the state claimed that censorship was intended to hold the communist threat in check, the range of its influence was more wide-ranging.

---

<sup>48</sup> The genesis of the South African National Gallery came from the SAAA in 1875 (see: Chapter Two)

<sup>49</sup> Dorothy Driver reported on a censorship conference that took place at the University of Cape Town (22-25 April 1981). Speaking out on black writers, attendee Sipho Sepamla spoke of the discrimination of censorship, which harassed black writers more than white and which banned books aimed at a black readership (Driver, 1981).



Figure 30: Paul Stopforth, *Biko Series* (originally *Untitled*, briefly changed to *We Do It*, then *Requiem for Allende I* in 1980). 1980.

Artists responded to censorship laws by circumventing apartheid dictates. They either used ambiguous titles or changed titles altogether depending on the context. They also used stylistic devices or metaphor to convey their message to circumvent restrictions (Coetzee, 1990:1-20).<sup>50</sup> Artist Paul Stopforth purposefully skirted censorship rules by overtly showing how naming art could be political. In 1981, two works from Stopforth's *Biko Series* (1980) which were originally untitled were selected for the controversial Valparaíso Biennial in Chile (discussed below). The works document the autopsy photos of Steve Biko's body. Stopforth drew attention to the apartheid regime by renaming the pieces 'Steve Biko' and 'We Do

<sup>50</sup> Coetzee (1981) discusses the censorship laws described in J.C.W van Rooyen's 1987 book by the same title. Concerning artists circumventing censorship laws see: Shannen Hill's (2005) discussion of Paul Stopforth's *Biko series*.



It' so that a Chilean audience would understand that South Africa was culpable for Biko's death. The titles were too explicit for the SAAA and Stopforth was asked to change them. Stopforth changed the titles, and made them even more politically explicit. He referred to the murder of the popularly elected Chilean president Salvador Allende who was murdered in the brutal military coup of 1973. Stopforth entitled his work: 'Requiem for Allende I' and 'II'. The works were entirely rejected by the SAAA and was withdrawn from the biennial but Stopforth had made a strong political comment on censorship and state involvement in art (Hill, 2005:101).



Figure 31: Paul Stopforth, Biko Series (originally *Untitled*, briefly changed to *Steve Biko* then *Requiem for Allende II*). 1980.

The South African National Gallery had at least one board member who also served on the censorship board.<sup>51</sup> His task was to ensure the gallery conformed to

---

<sup>51</sup> At least one government appointee was on the state's Censorship Board. According to Annual

apartheid censorship laws in their acquisitions and displays. However, evidence in the collection of accessioned art shows an interesting relationship to such state control. Although there was an overwhelming amount of work that conformed to old dictates and to exclusive support of art by white South African artists, fissures appear that point to contradictions.

The notion of 'African art' that conformed to ethnographic definitions slowly entered the collection, but it is important to understand that the idea of 'African art' being introduced into the South African National Gallery was underpinned by the apartheid regime's policy of separate development. It was safer to think of black people ethnographically and as tribes far removed from urban centres. Ethnographic difference is the overwhelming characteristic of what became known as 'African Art'. Contemporary African art also made a very limited appearance, but a small number of contemporary African artists were already recognised by prestigious art competitions such as the Cape Town Triennial.<sup>52</sup>

The inclusion in the South African National Gallery collections of traditional 'craft' did not only emphasise difference but also reinforced that the space of the national gallery was reserved for art of a particular kind. With an ambiguity of definitions, a concomitant interest in 'tribal' art started to grow, although it was most probably a left-over from modernist ideas of 'primitivism'.<sup>53</sup>

#### **4.2 PW Botha's politics and Separate Amenities (1980's)**

The duplicity of the South African National Gallery's positioning warrants an understanding of PW Botha's politics and its separate development policies, especially as they relate to education and amenities. Posel (1991:6) notes that

---

Reports five trustees were appointed by the government. Prof van der Merwe Scholtz, a professor of Dutch at UCT had served on the SANG's acquisitions committee from 1979 to 1993. See: South African National Gallery Annual Report's for the periods 1979-1993.

<sup>52</sup> Artists such as Lucky Sibiya with 15 woodcuts and work by Jackson Hlungwani were included.

<sup>53</sup> The Annual Report for 1981/1982 records a lecture by Anitra Nettleton on 'African tribal art'. (South African National Gallery Annual Report 1980/1981).

apartheid was not based on a 'grand design' or 'master plan'. There was no single, systematic blue-print in the minds of NP leaders that they conceived after their election victory in 1948. While there was some method in the construction of apartheid, the 'master plan' idea exaggerates the extent of continuity, control, and planning. According to Posel, uncertainties, conflicts, and failures were fundamental to the apartheid state's development. Rather, it could be said that Apartheid policy was partly a reaction to immediate pressures of the historical moment (Posel, 1991:6).

The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 reserved public facilities, which constituted anything from a library to a park bench, public premises, and public transport for the exclusive use of people of a particular race. HF Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs, engineered the law to segregate the public and introduce 'cultural apartheid'. In practice this allowed for the best public, educational, recreational, and religious resources to be reserved for whites. This law was extended to all public facilities and included museums. It is interesting then that the South African National Gallery never applied it. According to Joe Dolby, retired curator at the museum, the gallery interpreted the law quite loosely and it was applied quite flexibly inside the museum. The degree to which it was applied depended on the wishes of individual organisers of exhibitions (Dolby in Yoshiara, 2007:41). In 1953, the South African Art Association (SAAA) fought the implementation of apartheid at its exhibitions by stating that it was too difficult to maintain apartheid at its various venues. The government threatened to withdraw its financial support completely and the SAAA defended itself by noting that inevitably apartheid laws were already governing galleries and halls in various areas (Barben, 2015:54).

In 1983 PW Botha entrenched the separate development policy by drafting a new 'tricameral' constitution for South Africa. This was a 'three-house parliament' with separate chambers for the three races (Coombes, 2003:150). In a bid to win coloured and indian support Botha granted them very nominal political rights.

Black South Africans, who constituted the majority of the population, were entirely excluded and were instead invited to decide their 'own affairs' in one of ten homelands. As part of its segregation policy, the state divided all museums into 'own affairs' (white) and 'general affairs' (Indian, 'native' and coloured) (Davison, 1998:150). Own affairs pertained to the white population, general affairs to the general population. The South African National Gallery fell under general affairs. It did not formally instate apartheid practices, and it did not apply the colour bar in terms of access. Regardless of this classification, the prevailing apartheid practices caused a mental barrier in black people against entering the museum. There would be very little reason to enter if the museum so obviously related in its displays to a white culture. This can be seen in attendance records from the annual reports 1975-1976 where attendance is classified according to race. Over this period 72, 000 whites came to the museum while only 15, 000 'non-white' attendees were recorded (South African National Gallery Annual Report 1975/1976).

PW Botha saw power in creative terms. Influenced by military thinkers, he adopted the idea that South Africa was threatened by a communist-led 'total onslaught'. Fear of communism, verging on paranoia, was deliberately fuelled by politicians, state television, and popular magazines. Anti-communism was rooted in the anxiety that Moscow, in a bid to exploit the country's natural resources, was using all possible means to stir unrest in South Africa. This corresponded neatly with the American Reagan administration's view of the Soviet Union as the 'Evil Empire'. Botha therefore adopted a 'total strategy' to quell a 'total onslaught'. The concept was first articulated in the white paper on defence in 1977 and two years later was expanded as a twelve-point plan. This plan saw close control over and meticulous coordination of the economy, state administration, security services, the media, and all other public spheres (Dubow, 2014:200).

The premise of total strategy was that of a successful counter-revolutionary campaign that engaged all realms of society, politics, economy, and policy to

engage the enemy on every level. It suited Botha with his military background and who was attracted by the forward-looking Cape Afrikaner business leaders. Botha therefore shifted emphasis from the *volk* to a white survivalist stance. He believed that the logic of survival required a new form of white national unity rooted in free enterprise. To Botha's mind there was no place for backward-looking Afrikaner nationalism or for old style apartheid. He favoured a technocratic form of government with reduced powers for Cabinet and increased power for himself. By the late 1970's apartheid's ideology became a depoliticised discourse, as it attempted to show that it could incorporate a range of interests and ethnicities to form a united front against a black communist common enemy (Dubow, 2014:200).

Botha's political efforts resulted in a resurgence of protest action, followed by police crackdowns and increased censorship. The Medu Art Ensemble arose as a think tank for cultural revolution in opposition to Botha's total strategy. Medu, an existing community art centre project in Botswana became over time more affiliated to the African National Congress (ANC). They wanted to follow Oliver Tambo's idea that art could bring people together. They also wanted to heighten political consciousness and solidarity and published newsletters, accelerating the aforementioned conference of 1982 in Gaborone. Medu argued for a 'people's culture' that would be relevant to the anti-apartheid struggle. This would not be confined to the elite world of art museums but would be seen and practiced in the open on the streets. It would take the form of posters, banners, t-shirts, and newsletters. The Medu Art Ensemble newsletter argued that if art was to be relevant at all it certainly needed to be relevant to the anti-apartheid struggle (Peffer, 2009:77).

By 1985 near civil war existed in large parts of the country. The state retained control only by means of increased tyranny and brute force in the form of military presence, declaring states of emergency, and detentions. Resistance to the state intensified and the army started occupying many black townships. The

violence, however, spiralled further out of control. Meanwhile international condemnation grew and the international community imposed economic sanctions (Worden, 1994:126).

#### 4.3 Circumventing state censorship at the South African National Gallery (1979)

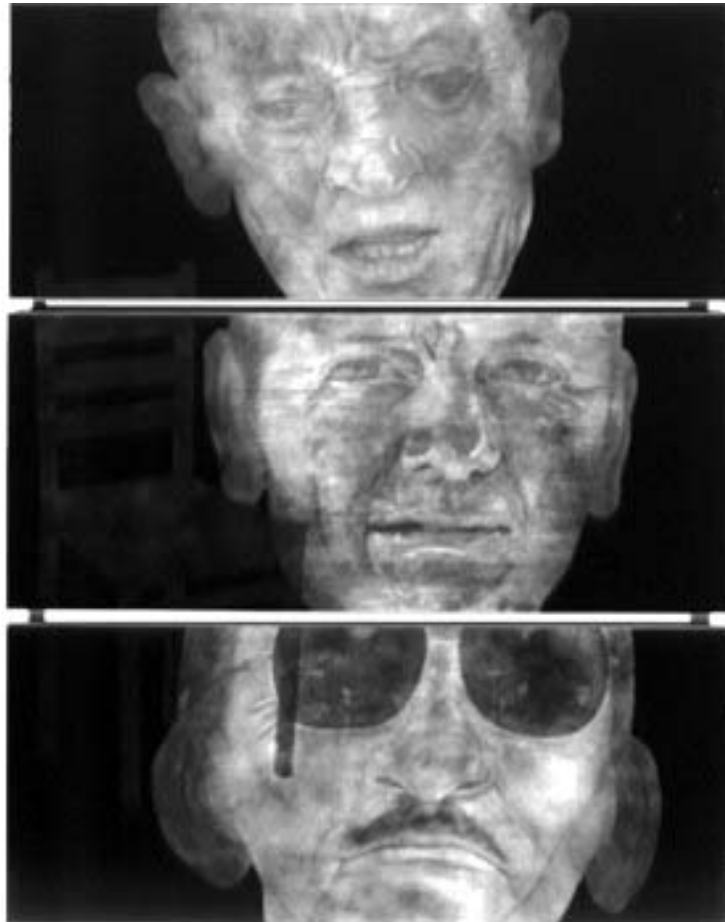


Figure 32: Paul Stopforth, *The interrogators*. 1979.

Figure 32, Paul Stopforth's *The interrogators*, was acquired in 1979 during Raymund van Niekerk's directorship (1976-1989) at the South African National Gallery.<sup>54</sup> Its subject matter makes it a bizarre choice for the state-aided

---

<sup>54</sup> Raymund Van Niekerk was director at the South African National Gallery from 1976, he retired in 1989. He was born in Bloemfontein and qualified as a dentist at Wits. He left South Africa for London and practiced dentistry for 15 years. He enrolled in the Courtauld to study art in London.

institution to acquire. In this way it does not, I believe, point to a more relaxed attitude on the part of the state. Rather, it points to evolving institutional priorities regardless of their duplicitous nature, which I further discuss in due course.

The work represents the three men responsible for the interrogation of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko. Biko later died while in police custody. The oversized heads have a strange out-of-focus quality that makes them look at once mask-like and uniquely human. Each has a unique personality, perhaps characterising tropes of interrogators and torturers. The angry hostile man uses force to get quick results. The smiling man uses friendship to get what he wants and he might even share a cigarette or a meal. Lastly, the man that hides his eyes as well as his humanity behind sun glasses seems especially menacing. He could be anything and he is the most brutal.

The stark black background makes them float above the surface of the painting. They appear to shift and move around in space. A part of them is all you will ever see. They have a light, translucent quality, they can appear and disappear, moving in and out of the viewers' field of vision. Nightmare creatures.

The chair on the left-hand side is a chilling testament to torture and detention. It is the object that grounds the floating heads, stretching to transgress the boundaries of the white borders dividing the three figures. Regardless of what those heads say, despite their shifting untruths, the chair is what keeps the reality of torture and death in detention in sharp focus and well-grounded in the painting. The chair is so solid that it remains visible through the interrogators' faces. That simple chair holds truths of violence, of the sufferings of detainees, and of their quiet dignity. It speaks of ironically being granted the dignity of

---

Upon returning to South Africa he was appointed professor of Fine Art at the University of Natal. He had a tempestuous relationship with his board of trustees (who he considered little more than government stooges) and the Minister of Education FW de Klerk. De Klerk suggested that Van Niekerk sell off part of the collection to fund the South African National Gallery. Van Niekerk died in Eastbourne, England in 2005. (Barron, 2005:16)



sitting on a chair like any other human when in fact all remaining sense of self-worth has been brutally killed.

According to Shashi Cook (2009:149) this work proved hard to pass by the South African National Gallery board of trustees without subterfuge. Since part of the board could not reach any decision towards acquiring or rejecting the work, it was brought before the entire board. Absurdly, its title was changed before showing it to the full board. It received the innocuous title 'Triptych' and UCT academic Neville Dubow motivated for its inclusion based on its formal strengths. Emma Bedford, Education Officer at the time, recounts that Van Niekerk was aware of the true meaning of 'The interrogators' since he was a key figure behind its acquisition. Again, quite absurdly, from time to time the work had to be replaced temporarily by a less controversial work, especially when visited by important people from the Education ministry (Bedford in Cook, 2009: 149).

Van Niekerk's role at the institution was interesting and ambiguous. Scholars such as Shashi Cook (2009:148) have called him an indomitable tyrant who wanted to dominate the museum with an iron fist. Along with Christopher Till, (director of Johannesburg Art Gallery) Van Niekerk is described as the head of the 'art mafia' (Cook 2009:148). Not caring what others thought of his lack of consultation Christopher Till quotes van Niekerk often saying 'Oh well, fok hulle!' <sup>55</sup> when encountering opposition (Cook 2009:148). Marc Barben's (2015) more recent study casts Van Niekerk as a proud internationalist who carefully managed a period beset by immense challenges. These related to increased international isolation as well as the 'philistinism' of the apartheid state. According to Proud in Barben (2015), van Niekerk despised the nationalist ideology, challenged governmental authority, and derided the NP's cultural agenda (Barben 2015:37). Barben makes it appear that van Niekerk all but actively resisted apartheid policies.

---

<sup>55</sup> Translates as 'Oh well, fuck them!'

In the context of high apartheid, I do not think that either Cook or Barben provide accurate readings. It is more realistic to assume that a constant negotiation of power prevailed between the director and his board members. Van Niekerk might have despised the hold the apartheid system had on his institution, but he was limited in asserting his choices by the system he served. He therefore chose a work that allowed him to play it safe in several ways. In acquiring the painting, he could please the UCT academics and their monopoly on 'good art', the (white) resistance artist, thereby assuming an agenda for political activism. His motivation, to my mind, still fell short of inclusivity. It probably had more to do with exploiting an opportunity to assert his own superiority, power, and control over all – the same tenets as those of both the apartheid regime and the (white) academics (whose vision and appreciation had after all been tempered by Eurocentric canons, standards, formulas, and laws of artistic expression and skill, as were those of the artist himself).

#### **4.4 The state of art in South Africa conference (1979)**

Van Niekerk's paper (1979:46-52) at the watershed conference 'the state of art in South Africa' of 1979 held at the University of Cape Town sheds a safely progressive light on his position at the institution. It was the first time the reality of art under apartheid was spoken about frankly in an academic context. There was an acknowledgment of the shared burden and shared responsibility needed to effect change. Although almost entirely white, the conference helped to propel discussion concerning the art forward and certain strategic steps were outlined. Influential delegates included activist and novelist Nadine Gordimer, poet Adam Small, artists Cecil Skotnes, Neville Dubow, Gavin Younge, and Van Niekerk. This was the first occasion on which new terms for acknowledging the broader and full range of art that emerged from under apartheid were formulated. Such

acknowledgement included designations such as ‘township art’, ‘transitional art’ and ‘resistance art’.<sup>56</sup>

While a variety of gripping issues were discussed, including how art could affect social change, state censorship, art education and the role of art patronage, I will focus on those relating to the South African National Gallery. Van Niekerk’s cautious paper on the ‘Administration of the visual arts in South Africa’ followed a fiery paper by artist Gavin Younge (1979:35-45) entitled ‘Dead in one’s own lifetime – the contours of art under apartheid’. A quick comparison of the two papers will bring the national gallery into perspective, as Younge’s paper provides a background to the art field under apartheid.

The conference program determined that Van Niekerk’s paper was to be followed by Younge’s paper and this put Van Niekerk under pressure. It might point to a veiled enmity towards the national gallery amongst an audience of academics, writers, poets, and artists. The audience might have seen the national gallery as part of the state apparatus positioned to control art in the country. Alternatively, the audience might also have understood the commonalities between the museum and the university. Both had their freedom curtailed by apartheid laws and all those who worked with them were both subject to and complicit with the apartheid state to greater and lesser degrees.

The academic papers more generally show the creative field to have been divided into two components: art answering to either academic or political frameworks, or both. This division excludes the notion of inclusivity and its implications for either. The academic component justified representing a sense based on art being ‘good’, sufficiently developed, existing within the praxis of its field, of a high quality, thought provoking, and independent. This view was unsurprisingly white. Almost by default, ‘political’ art that engaged with the social realities of

---

<sup>56</sup> See: Various authors. 1979. *The State of Art in South Africa Conference Proceedings*, Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

the day was emotive, expressive, and black. Since it was politically motivated it undermined the artistic freedom that academic artists claimed as their right. It is surprising that 'political art' was seen to hold associations with Communism rather than with freedom of expression.

Apolitical art was therefore equated with academic art. For example, the national gallery mostly acquired academically qualified artists' work. Academically qualified artists could attain the appropriate standards. A lack of these standards was one of the things that restricted black artists' work from entering the national gallery. However, there were also academically trained artists that produced work critical of the apartheid system. Such work usually had the required quality, but was not overtly political in that it did not take the form of political posters or banners, which contained iconography relating to the liberation movement.

Politically aware academic art straddled the above categories. Artists could provide ambiguous titles that would confound the censors, while producing work of a high academic quality, which showed that South Africa could boast artistic talent on a par with the rest of the world. Even this covertly implied third category was exclusive. Art produced by black artists, whether working in a political milieu or not, was still excluded during this period. It is interesting that such academic art with a political message started to enter the South African National Gallery in 1979. Although eventually called 'resistance art' or 'protest art', it was neither of these things. It became 'resistance art' or 'protest art' because of the way it was grouped together at this conference. Perhaps it was art with a deeper consciousness?

Ideas of academic art versus political art came up repeatedly throughout the 1980's. It is astonishing that at the height of apartheid, artist and academics could think that art produced in South Africa could be apolitical, that their work could be unaffected by the country's political realities. Every facet of life, including

culture, was affected and controlled by the state. It also shows how these academic and political identities can shift depending on the context. For example, Van Niekerk found this conference forum useful for airing his grievances concerning the government, and to show that the National Gallery faced serious constraints. Nonetheless, it is doubtful that he would have found much sympathy considering the much more pressing nature of critical issues raised by the other delegates. It is interesting that his voice was included at all, and points, as I have said before, perhaps to the position of the university as another deeply entrenched mechanism of the state. Van Niekerk's greatest problem was with the state and he starts his lecture about his relationship with them. Throughout his talk, he refers to the state as backward and unsophisticated:

I do not think that there would be much point in my spending time discussing the attitudes of South African officialdom to the visual arts. Whether officials in position of power choose to proclaim in public that 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever' or that 'All Modern Art is a Communist conspiracy', the effective attitude is one of profound disinterest compounded by distrust and hostility. When one prominent official advocated government aid in the form of bursaries in the arts, he said 'After all people should realise that they are not all scruffy immoral bohemians.' I read that as revealing a great deal about the opinions of his colleagues, if not about his own. (Van Niekerk, 1979:46)

Younge, in contrast to Van Niekerk, conducts a Marxist analysis of the art field in South Africa and attempts to expose the repercussions of apartheid on the nature of art in South Africa and the black artist in particular. The clear majority of art reflects the white, neo-colonial, middle class and this is exploited by the state. For Younge, the apartheid state came to rely on types of art that offered inadvertent collusion with the system of apartheid.

Although blacks are perhaps not openly discriminated against by art institutions and public art, there is nonetheless the impression that, proportionately speaking, they have very little to say in the dominant

modes of cultural expression in this country. One determining factor, which has been systematically overlooked by art historians because of its extra aesthetic dimension, is the structural context of exploitation, both political and economic, of the black artist. It is only after rubbing our noses in the morass of legislation and coercion which surrounds the lives of eighty percent of the population of South Africa, that we begin to give account of what shapes and distinguishes the general character of the art of this country. (Younge, 1979:37)

Younge goes on to enumerate the extensive apartheid state control affecting all parts of society and he focuses particularly on education. Following Verwoerd, it was not necessary for black people to learn anything that would not help them to serve white society. Younge suggests that the exclusion of blacks from art education in South Africa lies at the root of the biggest problem in the South African art world, namely its lack of black artists. Coupled with the lack of black artists was the fact that culture is considered neutral. Quoting Gramsci, Younge notes culture to be potent and value-laden. When it pretends to be neutral, it could only conform to middle class, white values of refinement acquired through the right to education that it claims only for itself. An inclusive culture, as a platform for free expression, suffers under the tenets of the apartheid state, because this state oppresses, censors, and bans any form of free expression that would challenge its reign. Younge cites as examples the bans on the production of posters and publications critical of the regime. Finally, Younge talks about the 'gallery system', which places art on a consumerist circuit as a commodity, and currency of apartheid and which further robs it of any remaining social character (Younge, 1979: 43).

Van Niekerk meanwhile shares very useful descriptions of the mechanisms of the state bureaucracy and the national gallery. He talks of the myriad of government structures that confound the processes of running an art museum. Some instruments of state are in the open while others are hidden. These included the poor funding received from the state compared to countries in similar economic circumstances. He compares the situation in South Africa to Canada and

Australia and describes these countries in economic terms, comparing their GDP's, for example. He does not in any way consider the brutal colonial histories that all three countries – South Africa, Australia, and Canada – share as former British colonies.

More hidden matters relate to government decisions enforced on the museum. Although, Van Niekerk is not explicit about what exactly these decisions were, I imagine that they would relate to the type of art deserving of being in the art museum. Van Niekerk describes the board as 'venerable old gentlemen' who knew very little of visual art, thought 'a thing of beauty is a joy forever', and who regarded Modern art as being subversive and therefore evil (1979: 48).

Van Niekerk tells of an occasion on which he probed a government official about membership on a significant Advisory Committee to the government on fine art. This committee made important decisions concerning fine art in the country. The official got defensive and threatening and told him that he was 'stepping onto thin ice'. Van Niekerk responded, 'I ventured the opinion that I would not be alone in the cold water!' (Van Niekerk, 1979: 47) implying partisanship with the official and with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee to the state. Van Niekerk's response might have been funny especially considering the covert atmosphere in the country. The incident could also be seen as one white art official threatening another when asking a very reasonable question. However, it also shows how the apartheid state operated even with regard to those they instated and employed. There was a sinister atmosphere of suspicion and paranoia even within the conservative echelons of public servants.

Various shifting layers of concealed operations crafted apartheid. The system was underhand and thrived on instilling fear. Often people assumed multiple roles. For example, a university professor could be on the Censorship Board, while a school child could be a police informer, and a doctor could be a torturer. Constantly being under strict state control, no one could ever be exactly sure of



the true loyalties of anyone. Occasionally the truth would out, but such murmurs would soon be silenced by brutality or deprivation.

A positive outcome of the 'State of the art in South Africa conference' was the formulation and passing of resolutions intended to change and challenge the status quo. Widely acknowledging that there was a crisis in the art of the country, participants called for art education to be implemented in schools. They acknowledged that it was the responsibility of all artists to work towards effecting change, and achieving a post-apartheid society. Lastly and importantly for my argument, participants urged artists to refuse participation in state-sponsored exhibitions until these changes were accomplished (Bill Ainslie, Cecil Skotnes & Andrew Verster, 1979: 159).

Regarding Cook (2009) and Barben's (2015) views on Van Niekerk as director of the National Gallery in the 1980's, I do not think of him as self-indulgent and dogmatic (as asserted by Cook) nor completely resisting apartheid in the museum and championing the anti-apartheid cause (as asserted by Barben). I agree that he was not a government stooge, although as I will show, government collusion was orchestrated in a way that was not always obvious and sadly it often required duplicity on the part of its employees.

Van Niekerk saw himself as progressive and critical of government policies. He saw the government officials with whom he had to work as unsophisticated and brutish. However, it is unclear whether he did this because he believed in a more left-leaning alternative or if it was simply because he wanted more Modern and contemporary, but still Eurocentric art at the national gallery. Van Niekerk wanted to develop the stale collections at the nation gallery to achieve a more contemporary and exclusively sophisticated face.

Van Niekerk spoke often and at length about the limitations of international isolation. He was certainly less high-handed than directors who came before him

and he also had a sense of humour in the face of increasing pressure from both government and the academics. However, I think that he toed the nationalist agenda to a degree that suited him. His involvement in the Cape Town Triennials that I discuss below will shed some light on my opinion of him as a player of both fields. In addition, it is important to consider the role that the South African Arts Association (SAAA) played in the whole tragedy. The SAAA acted as conduit between the various and different interest groups.

#### **4.5 South African Artists Association (SAAA)**

Raymund van Niekerk explained in 1979 that the South African Arts Association (SAAA) was part of the instruments of state (Van Niekerk, 1979:46). The state's Department of National Education (DNE) (headed for a time by FW de Klerk) was responsible for subsidising the South African National Gallery while utilising the support of the SAAA. The SAAA was the only organisation through which the DNE supported and encouraged the visual arts.<sup>57</sup> As such, the SAAA was the only medium through which the visual arts were officially promoted and on such grounds the organisation also purported to act as the voice of the South African artist.<sup>58</sup> In 1951 the SAAA contravened the government's segregation policies by refusing to instate apartheid policies of segregation at its exhibitions and lectures.<sup>59</sup>

Marilyn Martin became an influential figure in the white art world in the 1990's. In the 1980's Martin was president of the SAAA and wrote that since the state gave the association such poor funding, she was compelled to approach business for financial support. The designation of 'own affairs' limited her because it meant that the association was only seeing to the needs of whites (Martin,

---

<sup>57</sup> Note the term 'visual arts' which shows a break from 'fine arts'. Van Niekerk is trying to make a break with ideas of his colonial predecessors at the South African National Gallery (see: Chapter Two).

<sup>58</sup> This claim was openly contested even within white art circles (Van Niekerk, 1979:47).

<sup>59</sup> J. H. Viljoen, the Minister of Education was angered by the SAAA's decision but decided that since the halls and galleries already had apartheid laws in place it would have little effect of their decision to reject apartheid laws.

1988:19). Business with international ties was reluctant to be involved in funding an association such as the SAAA, a phenomenon that confirmed apartheid's range of influence as extending beyond the bounds of formal policies to the national business world. Yet, the reality was that the stipend the SAAA received from the government barely covered their costs, causing them to search for alternative sources of funding and given the local business world's reluctance, to implore for sponsorships from the broader, international business arena if they were to survive. This is ironic since much of their work involved furthering the government's aims. They were responsible for organising international exhibitions at the behest of the state, publicising South African art, and strengthening diplomatic ties through art.

The President of the SAAA, by virtue of his/ her position, sat on the government Advisory Committee, which met annually to advise the State on matters concerning the visual arts. Very little material of this committee's output is available for public scrutiny. Besides the name of the president of the SAAA, the names of the other members of this committee were not made public. Like many apartheid records, this information remains hidden or was possibly destroyed. Marilyn Martin was an active member of the SAAA in the 1980's. She became its president in 1988. Her presidency over the SAAA expedited her directorship of the South African National Gallery just a short while later in the 1990's. She held the position as SANG director for eleven years (Barben, 2015:61).

I argue that part of Martins success and longevity at the museum was due to her access achieved earlier via the SAAA to a hidden world of government collusion and international cooperation. She came to understand early on during her years as SAAA president how officials viewed art and this helped her to understand how to harness the power of such officials to further not only their own political objectives, but also those of the visual arts. This access allowed her to establish herself as *the* authority on ideas of national art long before it became an issue of national concern.

In an article that sketches the need for more funding in the visual arts Martin as SAAA president points out that,

Art history in the twentieth century shows the enormous extent to which Communism has used art as a tool for its ideology... this is a reality that will never be accepted in this country...America has always opposed the communist use of art. They have harnessed it in a democratic way because they know how to do this. In this country no effort has been applied. (Martin, 1988b:20)<sup>60</sup>

As the above quote shows, Martin understood the dynamics of art and politics. When Martin took up the position as director at the South African National Gallery in 1990, her discourse skills were honed and she knew what was expected of such an institution under a new dispensation.<sup>61</sup> Martin's role in the SAAA during the 1980's reveals an essential if sordid part of South African art's institutional history. It also questions the nature and motivation behind Martin's 'multicultural' art after apartheid, if perhaps this was a successful bid to 'harness' the communist threat into the art establishment.

---

<sup>60</sup> Originally published in Afrikaans as follows: '*...Kunsgeskiedenis van die twintigste eeu... bewys in watter enorme mate die Kommunisme die kuns inspan vir sy ideologie... dis n realiteit wat in ons land nog nooit aanvaar is nie. Amerika is nog altyd n teenvoeter antipode vir die kommuniste se gebruik van die kuns. Hulle het dit op n demokratise manier ingespan, want hulle weet hoe. Hier is nog geen poging aangewend nie*' (Martin, 1988b:20).

<sup>61</sup> Soon after entering the South African National Gallery Martin started publishing extensively on South African art having to be redressed. In a recently published book on heritage institutions in South Africa, written by stalwarts in the field of redress in public culture, the museum under Martin is described as follows:

Probably more than any other nation museum, the South African National Gallery explicitly committed itself to redress placing emphasis on its social and educational responsibilities seeking to preserve a multiplicity of cultural manifestations. (Minkley et al., 2017:111)

#### 4.6 The Cape Town Triennial and the Culture and Resistance Arts festival Gaborone, Botswana' (1982)

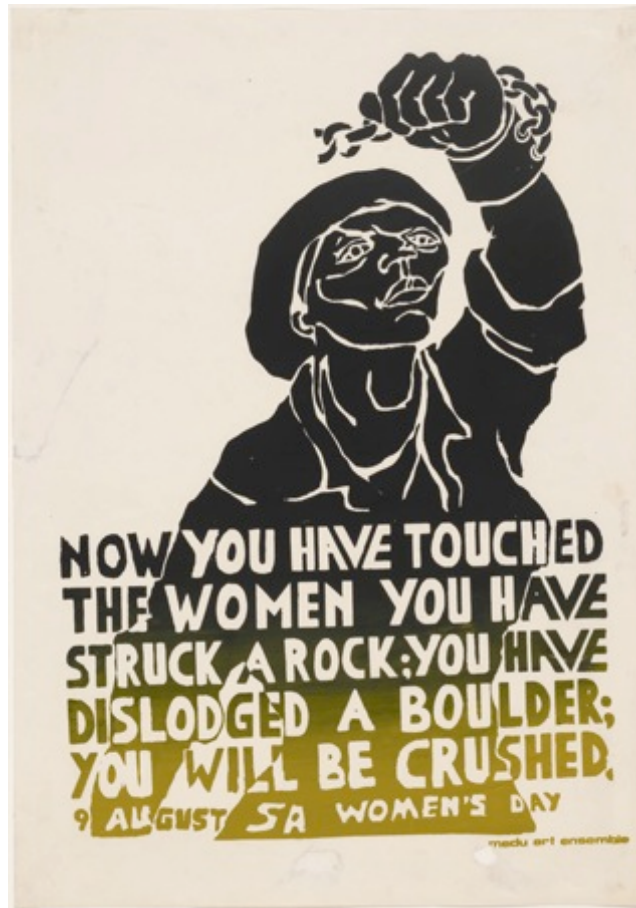


Figure 33: Medu Art Ensemble (Accredited to Thami Myele) *You Have Struck a Rock*. 1982.

##### 4.6.1 Inside the white art world: The Cape Town Triennial (1982)

The idea of the Cape Town Triennial (1982 - 1991), the most prestigious and largest art competition in South Africa, originated from the staff of the South African National Gallery and the regional branch of the SAAA. Seven other regional art museums participated in its organisation.<sup>62</sup> Raymund van Niekerk headed the board of the competition and the final selection of works and adjudication took place at the South African National Gallery. The competition

<sup>62</sup> These museums were, The South African National Gallery, William Humphreys Art Gallery Kimberly, King George VI Art Gallery Port Elizabeth, Durban Art Museum, Johannesburg Art Gallery, Pretoria Art Museum and the Tatham Art Gallery Pietermaritzburg (Mdluli, 2015: 110).

was promoted as a platform for discovering new talent, mirroring trends in America and Europe.

Since the competition highlighted contemporary art, it intended to play a part in establishing a contemporary South African art identity. Since the competition defined contemporary art in narrow terms, art produced by black artists was largely ignored, and the so-called South African art identity remained as contrived as ever before.

Studying the absence of rural black artists in these kinds of art competitions, Same Mdluli (2015) shows how the structures of the competition hampered the inclusion of black art. She suggests that the competition had a nationalist agenda, which manifested in its structure. Although its scale was impressive and hundreds of artists across the country submitted work, judging was based on the same narrow definitions of art that marked the norms of inclusion in the past. The Triennial played an important part in helping artists to be recognised in the art market and to make a name for themselves. Nonetheless, Mdluli suggests that exhibitions of this kind point to patterns of cultural dominance, where the colonial legacy of such exhibitions as well as practical limitations continued to exclude certain artists. Its range was hampered further because of an agenda based on celebrating individual artists while neglecting the collective experience of South Africans.

I agree with Mdluli's analysis and think that the triennial points to further dynamics on the art field. Although sponsored from outside the mechanisms of state, the Triennial shows a close relationship with the state as well as with big business. It is under these circumstances that corporate patronage of the arts started in the 1980's in South Africa.<sup>63</sup> Open only to South Africans living in South

---

<sup>63</sup> This included the Standard Bank Young Artists awards, the Volkskas Atelier Award and the Vita Art Now. For further details see: Arnold, M. 2009. *1986-1999: Looking back at politics, art and young artists*. In Crump, A and Maurice, E. (eds). *Standard Bank Young artists: 25: a retrospective exhibition*. Johannesburg: Standard Bank.

Africa the triennial was sponsored by the Rembrandt van Rijn Art Foundation. Anton Rupert's company, Rembrandt van Rijn began as a cigarette company but expanded to liquor, mining, industry, banking, and luxury goods. At the height of its success, the Van Rijn empire rivalled those of Anglo Gold and De Beers Mining.<sup>64</sup> Its founder and chair Anton Rupert was an influential member of the Afrikaner elite (Mdluli, 2015: 123).<sup>65</sup>

An Afrikaner organisation such as Van Rijn would show proud independence from the international community, an independence that would have been implicit in a competition of this kind. The unspoken message would be that not only is South Africa thriving culturally, with an abundance of art, it also has its own wealth to flaunt, despite the international condemnation of its human rights record. Anton Rupert came from an impoverished background and while he might have been critical about the limitations that the political system imposed on his business, his acumen was a model that the state would want to showcase. Art was therefore used to further the discourses of white nationhood, using the glint and gloss of capital and the self-made man to drive the point home.

There was a significant cash prize for the Triennial. The winner received R15 000 and a special minted gold coin, the 'prestigious Rembrandt Gold Medal'. There were also merit award winners and lesser cash prizes. Most importantly, given the scope and aims of this thesis, the winners would be included in Esme

---

<sup>64</sup> See: Meldrum, A. 2006. *Anton Rupert: South African tobacco tycoon who promoted equal rights during apartheid era*. The Guardian, 23 January. In this obituary article, Meldrum writes of Rupert in complementary terms. Looking at the racial make-up of board members of the Rupert business conglomerate shows limitations to Rupert's ideas of equal rights since the board is almost entirely white.

<sup>65</sup> Although Mdluli (2015) notes that Rupert was a member of the Afrikaner political elite, closer investigation shows that he had an unsettled relationship to Afrikaner nationalist policies during apartheid but refrained from confrontation that would threaten his business interests. Criticizing South Africa's race relations, however Rupert believed that 'if your neighbour does not eat, you will not sleep' and urged black economic advancement to build a more stable society for all. Nelson Mandela credited him as never having given handouts but of rather helping others to help themselves. See: Meldrum, A. 2006. *Anton Rupert: South African tobacco tycoon who promoted equal rights during apartheid era*. The Guardian, 23 January.



Berman's 'Art and artists of South Africa' (Mdluli, 2015: 118).<sup>66</sup> This would allow artists to be recorded for posterity. These factors point to adherence to a system of patronage similar to those practiced in Europe. Being recognised and rewarded by the state through the competition led not only to substantial financial reward, it also gave artists the chance to be recorded for all time in the most significant publication on South African art in the country.

It is little wonder that artist John Mitchell compares participation as 'equivalent to being an Oscar nominee... just being there up amongst the final few is equivalent to winning' (Mitchell in Mdluli, 2015: 118). Criticising the effects of the Triennial on the art world, arts journalist Barry Ronge (1988) wrote:

One cannot help observing that a new hegemony has emerged, which some call the Art Mafia and others refer to as 'a cartel of academic and sponsorship interests.' Look across the range of the sponsored exhibitions and one sees the same group of academics, museum directors and art honchos judging all the shows and as a result the same kind of art, indeed the same artists are winning over and over again. (Ronge, 1988:6)

Ronge writes about the limitations of the system and how decision makers exploit it, while artists, once recognised by the Triennial, could circulate more freely in an insular art world. These artists, according to Ronge, were the same year after year. The competition became self-serving to the institutions it collaborated with. Art from the competition, for example, entered the collection of the National Gallery and other prestigious art collections.<sup>67</sup> As a product of its time, when the state was increasingly seeking to defend its policies by securing the approval of big business, the Triennial attempts to show South African art as

---

<sup>66</sup> Esmé Berman wrote the definitive book on South African art, used to teach art at schools and at University. It was the only definitive guide to South African Art at the time.

<sup>67</sup> See acquisitions in: annual reports South African National Gallery 1979-1990 and (Jones, C. 1994)

proud, productive, and independent. A truer picture is that it was largely white, driven by changeable market forces, and as a result also limited in its scope.

#### 4.6.2 Outside the white art world: The Culture and Resistance symposium and Festival of the Arts, Gaborone' (1982)



Figure 34: Thami Mnyele, *Untitled*. 1982. Poster for the Culture and Resistance festival organised by Medu Art Ensemble, Gaborone, Botswana.

Meanwhile, across the border in Gaborone, Botswana, the largest non-racial South African arts festival was underway. Delegates gathered to discuss the role and function of art in working toward a democracy. It was a gathering of artists,

poets, musicians, and writers that gathered without the constraints of the apartheid state. Hosted by the Medu Art Ensemble, like the Cape Town Triennial it also sought an identity for South African art but it looked for an identity based on new definitions that were self-determined and not imposed by the state.

Medu attempted to define what such art was and, given the wide variety of artists, concluded that it meant different things. Visual artists contended with different constraints from those of musicians and writers for example. There was also criticism by artists that trying to ascribe a single identity to South African art would be over-prescriptive and would restrict creativity. Notwithstanding such criticism, important strides were taken. Artists were labelled 'workers' to counter the trap of individualism. The cultural worker was critically important to the struggle for freedom. A shift of terminology from the individual to the collective emerged, and the realisation that the race of the maker should not determine what he/she made, but rather the act of making, was emphasised. The acts of creation and interpretation were at the core of art and artists were no longer white and township artists black. Instead, all artists were cultural workers (Peffer 2009:80). Understandably, dramatically differing opinions as to the methods, aims, and aesthetic direction for such art also emerged from the discussions. For example, both Nadine Gordimer and Abdullah Ibrahim felt that there was a need for greater aesthetic 'openness'. Along with other delegates, they looked beyond the apartheid state and imagined a new future. Nevertheless, according to artist Lionel Davis, while participants discussed the role of art in Gaborone amicably during the exhibition, the debate became more polarised afterwards (Davis in Peffer 2009: 81).

#### **4.7 Thami Mnyele: artist, activist**

How do we as cultural workers make this commitment concrete? The struggle of the artist must be rooted in the majority of our people. Any actual engagement in the making of change must of necessity seek inspiration and alliance with the movement of the people. This is the new generation of cultural works that is growing inside and outside

South Africa, and multiplying. Already this voice of resistance is heard.  
(Mnye in Gonzalez, & Keller, 2009: 106)

For visual artist and member of the Medu Art Ensemble and organiser, Thami Mnye, an identity of art focused on a commitment to liberation. Art in its nature was about freedom and creativity, making art echoed liberation ideas because it got to the heart of what it meant to be human. Apartheid denied black people humanity in its full spectrum. The social function of art spoke to the collective liberatory function of art making but also of conscientizing society as to apartheid's ills. Speaking in Gaborone, in 1982 Mnye's ideas are tied to the tenets of Black Consciousness. The importance of relevance in art meant that art had to serve a social function. In this way, messages had to be clear and your community needed to understand your message. In Black Consciousness, individual change would affect communal change. Mnye spoke of art as a commitment to liberation from white minority rule. Andile Mngxitama explains how Mnye was introduced to art. Through a chance encounter while listening to jazz by John Coltrane in Alexandra township, Mnye met Bokwe Mafuna. Mafuna, a photographer, was a close friend of Steve Biko and Wally Serote.<sup>68</sup> Mafuna asked Mnye what would you like to do and he said 'I want to draw', and 'this is how the fire was lit' (Mngxitama, 2009).<sup>69</sup> Serote meanwhile introduced Mnye to the artistic circles he frequented. He encouraged Mnye to probe his subject matter more deeply and invited him to design the covers of his books of poetry. He became a father figure, mentor and friend (Barbara Lindop, 2008). Historian Diana Wylie (2004) explains how Mnye's early iconography in his drawings, graphic work and design centred on portrayals of living in a time of

---

<sup>68</sup> Wally Serote was a poet and like Mnye, loved literature. By the age of 25 Serote had been arrested and detained often by police mostly because he refused to carry his passbook. But Serote's socializing in racially mixed, progressive circles drew the attention of the more vicious security police. This led to crueler detention practices. Serote was forced to stand for days without food, or a toilet and he was beaten in shifts. When Serote came out of prison he yearned to express the 'disenchantment' with the apartheid state that plague him and his peers like Mnye. (Wylie, 2008:34)

change. This was not a hopeful time – it was the 1970's, a time of pessimism and longing.

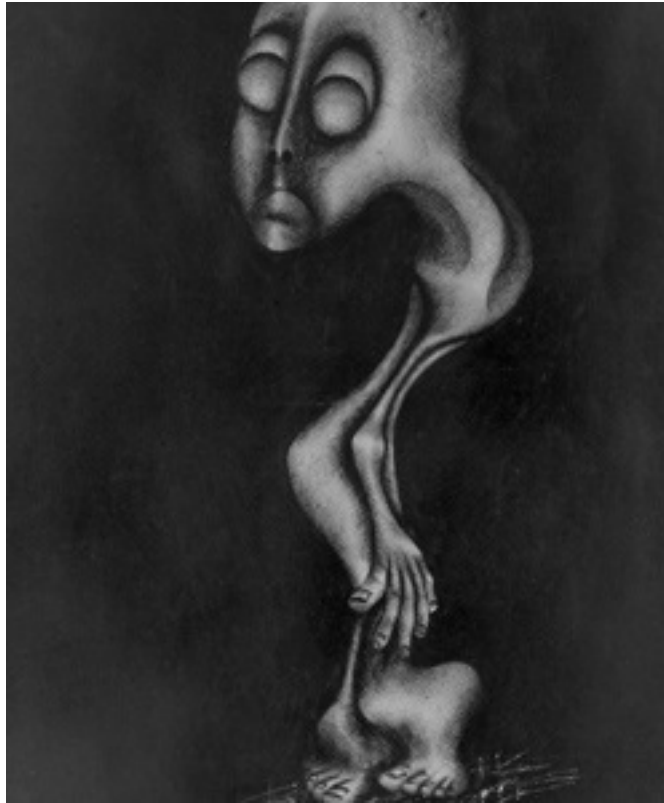


Figure 35: Thami Myele, *There goes a man, sad and deep in sorrow like a river underground*. 1972.

Mnyele used images of the mother and foetus, the face turned away and the hand stretched out in hope. Following police interrogation in 1977 concerning his activities with Black Consciousness art groups, Mnyele depicted the effects of violence on the human body. Red slashes denoted blood, skin is pebbly and decomposed. Wylie sees these images as the emotional consequences of being dominated (2004: 58).

By the 1980's his work shows very different images. His figures face forward and look toward the distance, chins raised and proud. His later images celebrate popular strength, optimism, and unity. His medium and material changed and could be used for popular consumption. Block prints were mostly used. Print blocks that could be reused on newsprint and disseminated quickly was the

chosen medium. An iconic image is the hand raised in a fist breaking shackles is accredited to Mnyele (Figure 33). Raised fists reminiscent of Russian posters now hold tools. His figures are animated in action and are no longer incapacitated by hopelessness.

Referring to the iconography of Black Consciousness, historian Shannen Hill (2005) notes that the emergence of Black Consciousness through organisations such as Medu was innovative because it recognised the potential of culture to challenge concepts of racial difference central to apartheid. Consequently, images of raised fists breaking chains became an important signifier of Black Consciousness. Andile Mngxitama (2009) however, considers these later images simplistic and reduced symbols of the black experience. Mngxitama suggests that celebrating Mnyele's transition from dreamlike iconography to militant iconography betrays an error in understanding the consciousness of liberation. For Mngxitama, Mnyele's earlier work, which is at once magical and surreal points to a deeper consciousness. It confronts black suffering in its own language. This language invites self-reflection and is almost traumatic in its demand (Mngxitama, 2009:no pagination). Barbara Lindop (2009) notes however that the style and iconography of his later work was naturally different from his almost mystical earlier work. His later work is a call to action. This was at a time when Mnyele no longer had time to focus on his own artistic development, which was only really starting.<sup>70</sup> For Lindop and Mngxitama, Mnyele sacrificed his artistic development for the urgent demands of the revolution.

Ideas of Black Consciousness gave Mnyele hope and optimism for the future but he had learnt after police interrogation that his later project of state resistance would be hampered inside the country. In 1979, Mnyele left Johannesburg and settled in Gaborone, Botswana, with his friend exiled poet Wally Serote. Shortly

---

<sup>70</sup> Referencing Wylie (2008), Lindop notes that Mnyele's first and only exhibition of his early work was held at the Botswana National Museum and Art Gallery soon after he arrived in 1980. Lindop calls this exhibition the zenith of Mnyele's artistic career because thereafter he became more and more involved in the resistance movement (2009: 60).

thereafter he joined the African National Congress in secret and he committed himself to the armed struggle. Mnyele and Serote worked with the art group Medu Art Ensemble. Mnyele became involved in the publications and research unit. The exhibition *Art Toward Social Development* accompanied the Culture and Resistance symposium and Festival. It was held at the Botswana National Museum and Art Gallery. It was organised by amongst others, Emile Maurice who worked as an education officer at the South African National Gallery from 1988.<sup>71</sup> Writing about 'community art' Maurice notes that,

Community art opens up the gates for a democratic art in which 'ordinary' people are able to communicate their experiences and feeling without a recourse to training...these expressions can convey deeper insights into the social and personal realities of our time than might be the case with art forms more acceptable to galleries. (Maurice, 1988: 28)

Speaking about the connection between African tradition and progressive community art Maurice notes the importance of shared ownership of art in 'community art.'

In the western tradition the artist is accountable to nobody but himself...by contrast the community artist paints the concerns and aspirations of the community...some community artists feel the community 'owns' their work, much in the way that a mask in traditional culture belongs to the clan. (Maurice in Pepper, 2009: 94)

Emile Maurice worked in the education department of the South African National Gallery during the directorship of Marilyn Martin. Annual reports show the extent to which the Education department took art programs into poor black areas of the city. Maurice was responsible for the vast extent of this.

The issue of art versus propaganda is an interesting one, and although the topic is beyond the scope of this study, it is worthwhile to note that Mnyele himself thought that his later work progressed for the common good. Instead of expressing his individual situation as an oppressed black man Mnyele became

---

<sup>71</sup> South African National Gallery Annual Report 1988/1991.



part of a movement that worked towards freedom. Although Mngxitama (2009) calls this idea the ‘impact of the ideological straight-jacket of the liberation movement’ Mnyele noted in an address at the Culture and Resistance festival (1982) that:

Whatever indulgence we engage ourselves in we must not be blind to the river of life within and around us, that social stream from which art feeds and is nourished: the community (Mnyele in Gonzalez & Kellner, 2009:6).

The *culture and resistance festival* aimed to examine and propose suggestions for the role of art in the active pursuit of a democratic South Africa. Art along with other forms of culture was considered a weapon of the liberation movement. Art would be used to further the goals of the movement toward democracy. The aim of the movement was to unite South Africans through art but was based on the idea that if culture was non-racial it could be used as a critical weapon and it could therefore foster change.

#### **4.8 Apartheid intervention and Operation Plecksy (1985)**

According to his friend and biographer Diana Wylie (2008), Thami Mnyele was mild mannered, well liked and dreamy. He was a political exile in Botswana with his second wife and son. The Botswana government had permitted the ANC to set up offices in Gaborone from which they could disseminate propaganda. As the South African security police started targeting countries outside South African borders the Botswana government asked a number of ANC members to leave both for their safety and to avoid attacks on nationals. Thami Mnyele had been asked to leave Botswana for his own safety, but he was reluctant to leave. He gave his art supplies to Medu members, and he was saying his goodbyes before leaving Botswana. He phoned his father to say that he was leaving to France or Scandinavia to study art (Wylie, 2008:190). This is how Wylie describes Mnyele’s last morning:

It was early winter in Gaborone. The air was dry, dusty and cold in the morning. Thami got up wearily and put on a warm, green-checked shirt. In his shirt pocket he placed Mint Imperials, so he could pop one in his mouth whenever fatigue overtook him, and lip ice to counter act the desiccating air. He felt lonely...a few days before Thami had said goodbye to Rhona at the Gaborone station as she boarded a train north, carrying 'sensitive' documents. He planned to join her soon in Zambia, but hadn't yet packed...Thami may have heard the crunch of footsteps. Thinking perhaps that he was being joined by comrades he moved closer to the door. His hand would have gone to the light switch and then to the doorknob. Pulling the door toward him, he would have been faced with four heavily armed men... slamming the door on his hunters, he ran through the kitchen and out the back door, desperate to get over the fence and disappear into the night. The bullets caught Thami as he started to scale the fence. Within seconds his body was hanging lifeless from the wire. (Wylie, 2008:189)

Thami Mnyele was killed early on the morning of 14 June 1985. South African commandos raided ANC offices and surrounding houses in Gaborone. Twelve people were killed, amongst them Mnyele and other members of Medu. Mnyele was the first to be shot and killed. The attackers knew Mnyele was an artist and they stole a number of his paintings.<sup>72</sup> According to Johan Coetzee of the South African Police, the trigger for the raids was an attack on the house in Cape Town of a Deputy Minister of the House of Representatives. The four suspects the state sought were not at the sight of the raid. Those suspects were found later at a roadblock on the border of Lesotho where they were shot and killed on sight.

The Military operation that resulted in Mnyele's death, Operation Plecksy was botched.<sup>73</sup> The wrong people were targeted and killed, none of them were senior ANC military figures. Instead, amongst those killed were a six-year-old child Peter Mofoka, a recent mathematics graduate from the University of Botswana Mike Hamlyn, a school teacher Duke Machobane, a seventy-one-year old refugee Tim Williams, and a number of Batswana women including Gladys Kesupile and Euginia Kobole. The general negative reaction to the raid was so great that an

---

<sup>72</sup> Paragraph 446 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report: Vol 2, 1998.*

<sup>73</sup> This was the only raid for which the TRC Commission received amnesty applications and for which there is clear evidence of state authorization. PW Botha approved the order. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report: Vol 2, 1998, pp148-150)

elaborate propaganda exercise had to be mounted to justify it.<sup>74</sup> A week following the killings the SABC did a feature on the raids, *Focus with Freek* (hosted by Freek Robinson). Craig Williamson (South African master spy) displayed Mnyele's artist's portfolio with its contents on a large table. Included were posters and pen and ink drawings. Williamson used this art as evidence that Mnyele was a terrorist (Peffer, 2009:98). Williamson also showed weapons as proof of insurrectionary activities. Stories were planted in the newspapers such as *The Citizen* and *The Times* with headlines such as 'The guns of Gaborone'. During his testimony at the TRC human rights violations hearings Eugene de Kock, police colonel, torturer and assassin stated that the weapons on display were not captured in the raid but were his own, borrowed by Williamson for propaganda purposes (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report: Vol 2, 1998).

#### **4.9 People's art and the state**

The apartheid government realised the power of 'people's art', they felt threatened by the tide of 'people's culture' and popular art that encouraged resistance to apartheid. At the Gaborone Festival, the co-mingling of artist regardless of race posed a greater threat to the state than the art on display. By the late 1980's the debate in South Africa on the nature of a committed art was no longer theoretical. Following cross border raids such as Operation Plecksy mass protests and the concomitant use of popular protest material reached a fever pitch. The State and more conservative art administrators felt threatened by the surge of people's culture.

Marilyn Martin as director of the SAAA advocated exhibiting South African art abroad in contravention of the Cultural Boycott, most notoriously the Valparaiso Biennial of 1987 (Richards, 1987:no pagination). Martin used language reminiscent of PW Botha's 'total strategy' while referencing people's art.

---

<sup>74</sup> Paragraph 447 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report: Vol 2, 1998.*

The Communists have always understood the value of the arts and culture in their revolutions everywhere...the same thing is happening here in South Africa with people's art and people's culture. To keep the tide in check the SAAA will simply have to have the financial backing to support art in the interests of everyone...this role must be recognised and used as a powerful weapon in combatting totalitarian and reactionary thought and action. (Martin in Powell & Richards, 1989:28)

It is clear from the above quote that Martin saw art as a tool that could be controlled and defined by the state. This is a dramatic contrast with the views as director of the National Gallery a year later in 1990. Her changeable position will be discussed in Chapter Six. Minister of Education FW de Klerk, and later State President, also changed his stance dramatically post 1994. At a conference on South African art at the University of Stellenbosch in 1988 he paralleled Martins sentiments.

We are currently experiencing a revolutionary onslaught...there are also strategies to misuse the arts to effect the total overthrow of the existing order...if the concept of 'peoples education' and 'peoples art' is that which serves the revolution, then we cannot support it and must take steps in the interests of security, in the interests of stability, in the interests of the values which bind us and which brought us together here. (De Klerk in Powell and Richards, 1989: 28)

De Klerk and Martin both worked for state institutions, De Klerk Minister of Education over saw cultural institutions such as the South African National Gallery and Martin was deputy Director then Director of the SAAA. Using words in their discourse such as 'freedom', 'contemporary' and 'internationalism' showed that they shared a common understanding of the role of art. Although their views overlapped both Martin and De Klerk's views after apartheid would not be politically correct and could be seen as political fear mongering.

#### **4.10 Cultural boycotts (1981)**

According to ANC president, Oliver Tambo, addressing the UN council in 1981 apartheid posed a serious problem to world peace.

The South African problem will increasingly, rapidly unfold and escalate to a raging war engulfing all of southern Africa. Certainly the vigorous arming that is going on in our time seems to envisage and be a preparation for an approaching world war. It is not too speculative to suggest that South Africa could provide the necessary spark. (Tambo in Beaubien, 1982: 12)

The United Nations was the first international body that directed cultural boycotts and sanctions toward South Africa in 1968. The UN resolution 2396 requested that all state and organisations suspend cultural, educational and sporting exchanges to South Africa (Baubien, 1982:6). In 1984 Resolution (35/206E) appealed directly to writers, artists and musicians to boycott South Africa. There was a request that the Special Committee against apartheid promote campaigns for 'total isolation of South Africa.' In light of this request South Africa found allies who were also shunned by the international community.

#### **4.11 Valparaiso Biennale Chile and exhibitions of 'good will' (1986)**

Officials in Chile initiated the Valparaiso Biennale after the brutal military coup of 11 September 1973.<sup>75</sup> At the time, Chile was ruled by military junta under the command of General Pinochet. Congress was dissolved and a country-wide state of siege declared, under which hundreds of people were detained and countless more extra judicially executed, a state policy of 'disappearance' put in place and torture was used systematically (Amnesty International Report, 2003:1). At the time of the Biennale in Chile, there was a resurgent paramilitary intimidation and execution not acknowledged by the government. The state placed intellectuals under surveillance and they were singled out as encouraging a subversive climate.

---

<sup>75</sup> At least 30,000 people were killed during the coup including the democratically elected president Salvador Allende.

Simple communication became a crime. Artists, students and other professionals were persecuted on an unprecedented scale (Dorfman & Vale, 1982: 71).

There is a clear parallel between Chile and South Africa at this time. Both were looking to change world opinion, they were brutal states. Both were isolated and in need of allies. That is besides the fact that they both had shocking human right records while under a state of siege. These included in both cases, states of emergencies, the prevalence of the death squads, long term disappearances' and torture. As with South Africa, Pinochet's regime was violently anti-Marxist and anti-Communist. Organised by the municipality of Valparaiso which was not an elected body, the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, claimed however, that the art competition was an 'elite encounter with avant-garde art' (Richards, 1987:27). The selection panel included members from Chile and South Africa, including the South African ambassador to Chile who was an ex-military man. Marilyn Martin who was part of the selection committee and later became a judge represented the South African Arts Association (SAAA).

Relating her experiences in Chile, Martin talks about the similarities of the two countries. Both, according to Martin have similar geographic features as well as political banishment from the international community. While Chilean artists were concerned with democratic processes South African art reflects the spiritual condition and expectations of a state in turmoil. However, while in South Africa the arts is dependent on the goodwill of the private sector, in Chile thousands of American dollars are given as prizes. Ultimately in 'Chile art is more important than sport' (Martin, 1986:55).

I could hardly have asked for a more rewarding and enriching experience than my trip to Chile and my participation as judge in the seventh international Biennial of art. I learnt anew that art is truly a universal language, which transcends barriers of geography, politics, culture, creed and education. If only the powers that be would recognise that. (Martin, 1986:56)

Martin's piece emphasises the formal qualities of art and mentions the importance of 'a concern for social issues without sacrificing formal pictorial values' (Martin, 1986:56). Importantly however, Martin emphasises extensive Chilean government art funding. For Martin, Chile was a good example of how communist leaning of artists could be subverted and incorporated into a project that was sympathetic to state interests.

#### **4.12 South African Artists respond to Valparaíso (1987)**

Artists were selected for the Valparaíso Biennale by a small team from the SAAA. Art by black artists had often been part of the selection. Although all work had to subscribe to state censorship (Hill, 2005:16). I believe that art by black artists was included because it revealed on an international stage that South Africa encouraged the art of all its people. Contrary to the image the media portrayed, South Africa was in fact civilised.

In 1987, there was another controversy surrounding South Africa's participation in the Biennale, leading the four representative artists to write a 'legitimizing statement'

We, the undersigned, would like it known that: Firstly we reject politically oppressive systems wherever they occur and secondly, we have accepted to exhibit at the Eighth Valparaíso Biennale, subject to the following: We understand that we are selected on merit as practicing artists, we will exhibit as individual artists and not as representatives of the government. We support the right of all artists to make and exhibit art in any country. It has been agreed that our works and titles will be accepted in their entirety without any form of censorship. (Invitation to International Biennial, 1987:3)

Signed Marion Arnold, Keith Dietrich, Karel Nel, Henry Symonds and Margaret Vorster.



It is incomprehensible that these artists believed that writing a justifying statement would make their participation value free. There is something tragic about the way white artists tried to work with the state (by exhibiting their work) but at the same time tried to distance themselves from it (by writing a statement). This double-speak/ double-think is again reinforced by the following statement released by the SAAA on behalf of the artists.

The SAAA is a non-racial, non-political organisation, which has as its main objective the promotion of art and artists in this country. It receives funds from the state for running Head Office. When invitations are received to participate in international shows the SAAA receives support from the Department of Education. (Invitation to International Biennial, 1987:1)

It is interesting that artists chose to acknowledge a body sponsored by the state as a-political which was obviously false. This points to the tragic state of South African art during apartheid. Artistic expression was a complete reissue when confined to the dictates of the state. These consoling fictions allowed South African artists to participate in exhibitions of this kind while protecting the long-term effect on their reputations.

Diplomatic exhibitions to South Africa from Chile served the purpose of strengthening the ties between the two countries. In 1985 Chile sent an exhibition of photographs to Pretoria as an exercise of solidarity and friendship between the two countries. At the same time the ship Esmeralda docked in Table Bay in Cape Town on a diplomatic mission of goodwill. The press photographed Cape Town school children who were welcomed on board.

#### 4.13 The Esmeralda and El Rostro de Chile (The face of Chile) Pretoria exhibition (1985)



Figure 36: On board the Esmeralda in Table Bay, Cape Town. 1985.

Figure 36, a photograph of the ship the Esmeralda docked in Table Bay, is an example of state propaganda. It is not coincidental that the girl on the sailors right is coloured and the one on the left is white. South Africa and Chile with their tyrannical governments wanted to project an image of security and innocent harmony that was beneficial to both countries. A smiling man, in

sailor's costume poses with the two young girls on a wooden railing aboard the ship *Esmeralda* in Table Bay, Cape Town. The Chilean ship was docked in the harbour as part of a diplomatic exercise. School children went on board for a guided tour. It was an exciting occasion to go on board the beautiful Spanish galleon. It is unlikely that at the height of the cultural boycotts the children would have experienced visiting a ship from a far-off land. The children pose for the photograph as they might pose with Father Christmas at a shopping centre – they look secure, relaxed and happy. They trust those who belong to the 'trustworthy' professions of the adult world, firemen, doctors and sailors. The men in those professions work to protect the world and to make children believe that they are safe. The photograph was from *The Cape Times* newspaper and was perhaps circulated elsewhere. And in the same way that South Africa wanted to project the image of civility, competence and friendliness to the world in the face of international condemnation, Chile under Pinochet's dictatorship wanted to project similar things.



Figure 37: *The Esmeralda* in Table Bay. 1985.

In an opening speech of an exhibition of Chilean photography in 1985 *El Rostro de Chile* (the face of Chile) Martin talks of the geography of the land as an inspiration before moving on to formal aspects of the photographs in display.

This exhibition entitled 'The face of Chile' focuses our attention on two things, a country and an art form. I would like to join the poet Angel Cruchanga in his song, for I too have seen the face of Chile and it follows my heart...this collection enables us to form an idea of the 'face of Chile' and to become aware of the talents of her photographers. I hope that we can have, in the near future, a more complete exhibition of the visual arts in Chile, which are developing steadily towards an own identity, an own destiny. I hope these photographs will shorten the geographic distance between Chile and South Africa. We have in art a truly universal language. (Martin, 1986:65)

By ending her speech in praise of diplomatic relations between South Africa and Chile and by referencing developing an art that has a unique national identity, Martin draws a parallel between the two countries and their position in the world. This is interesting considering the photographs on display, which were an obvious attempt at state propaganda. Images included dramatic scenery, which referenced ancient South American civilisations, smiling coal miners, photogenic university students and the ship Esmeralda. Martin neglects to mention the ship Esmeralda. The Rettig Report compiled by the Chilean state in 1991 registers a number of navy vessels used as detention and torture centres by the Chilean navy at the time of the coup lead by Pinochet. According to the Rettig Report, the Esmeralda had installed a unit for the interrogation of detainees. Such interrogation included torture as a general rule.

Antonio Leal, a deputy for the Party for Democracy in 1973, described the type of torture carried out on the Esmeralda including the use of electric prods, high-voltage electric charges applied to the testicles, hanging by the feet and dumping in a bucket of water or excrement. The ship was seen as a symbol of the cruel fate of political prisoners in Chilean recent history, especially of the indiscriminate

use of torture by government officials. Over the years, as part of Amnesty International's work against gross human rights violations committed in Chile during the military government (1973 -1990), Amnesty International has documented and published a number of testimonies of victims tortured on the Esmeralda (Amnesty International Report, 2003).

#### **4.14 Arts funding: Foundation for the Creative Arts (1989)**

In 1989, the National Party was reeling from the realities of economic sanctions and international isolation and a disastrous international image. There was a desperate need for an image change but also for concrete steps toward negotiating with the ANC. The party was going to have to adopt a softer, more reconciliatory approach while maintaining and growing white economic prosperity. FW de Klerk and friend Roelf Meyer could see the long-term benefits of negotiation and the limitations of PW's old-fashioned dictatorial brand of Afrikaner nationalism. In this shifting context FW de Klerk granted Marilyn Martin the funds she had been seeking. Martin was responsible for securing these funds, although Dr Jan Schutte had initiated it. Martin speaks at length of her meeting with FW. She speaks of the nature of art in South Africa the importance of state sponsorship (Martin, 1989:3).

With the establishment of the Foundation for the Creative Arts, De Klerk made money available to art without the constraints of the traditional channels of the SAAA (De Klerk, 1989:4). In his open address in Pretoria he talks about the relationship between art and the state. The state made the funds available for starting the project but it was not instituted in parliament so would not be under the control of the state. Employing the double speak of the apartheid state, he emphasises that art needs freedom to survive and prosper but that art can also be used as moral upliftment and as part of state security. According to de Klerk the arts should be able to function as freely as possible. He noted that deliberate exclusion through cultural boycotts and international isolation curtailed art more

than enough. Since art is tied to unique gifts, emotions and values of talented people the arts is an area the government must not interfere.

The State does, of course, have a role to play when it comes to the creation of a positive climate and the maintenance of sound morals and security. (De Klerk 1989: 4)

De Klerk therefore reiterates the role of the state. While artists are individuals the state needs to keep them on track and maintain sound morals. Art is a matter of national security.

Martin's aim was to secure funding for the SAAA, which she achieved. R1.9 million rand was budgeted that year and a further R2 million was to be made available for the next financial year (De Klerk, 1989: 5).<sup>76</sup> However both De Klerk and Martin were ambitious and had their sights set at higher levels. FW de Klerk became state President in August 1989 and Marilyn Martin joined the South African National Gallery as a member of the SAAA on the Board of Trustees that same year (South African National Gallery Annual Report, 1988/1989: no pagination). The following year she was appointed as director of the South African National Gallery, Raymond van Niekerk had received early retirement. Martin held that position for eleven years. She was to institute major change at the museum. Martin's tenure at the South African National Gallery as well as the Foundation for the Creative Arts will be discussed in Chapter Six.

#### **4.15 Conclusion**

In this chapter I looked at a deeply divided art world. This was made up of the officially sanctioned art world on the one hand and on the other hand was the reviled, unofficial voice of art. Manifestations of state control at the South African National Gallery were explored while sketching the field of conflict and contention in the broader context. Members in official circles described the best

---

<sup>76</sup> See: Chapter Six for a detailed discussion on the Foundation for the Creative Arts.

type of art as neutral and apolitical. This was because ‘people’s art’ or ‘community art’ questioned the status quo and undermined apartheid authority. I included a discussion of ‘people’s art’ and showed how the state attempted to obliterate it. ‘Peoples art’ was burgeoning and it rejected state sanctioned spaces such as the South African National Gallery and official competitions of art.<sup>77</sup> Instead it found its place on the streets and in neighbouring African countries such as Botswana.

---

<sup>77</sup> In 1979, there was an open call for artists to boycott Government institutions such as the South African National Gallery at *The State of Art in South Africa* conference at the University of Cape Town. See: Conference Proceedings, 1979, *The State of Art in South Africa*, UCT.



## Chapter Five

### *The black body imagined in a white art world (1990's)*

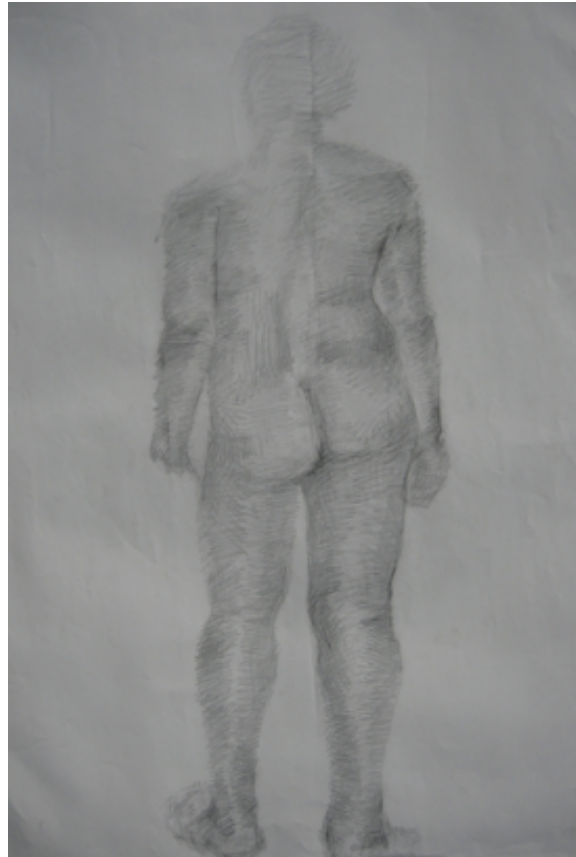


Figure 38: Mary Coombes, *Thandeka*. 1993.

#### **5.1 Introduction: Life drawing and art instruction at Rhodes University**

Every Thursday I'd wrestle Thandeka. I'd measure her and move around her and try to squeeze her onto my paper. Thandeka was our life model. She never met our eyes and we never knew her last name. I started with newsprint and charcoal, scraping away harrowing, torturous black lines. Always fighting with the medium, getting more charcoal on my hands and clothes than on the paper. Measuring and moving and hiding behind my drawing board. Thandeka wouldn't fit. Her feet and her hands always fell outside. At times, I was lost in an ocean of white emptiness. At other times, I stood behind that board too afraid to make the first mark.

The dance around Thandeka began again. I tried another viewpoint, her back. Looked at every hair follicle, every pore and scar. I began to get to know the physicality of her body better than I knew my own. I looked hard as if looking would ease the blocked pathways from my eyes to my hand. I struggled to contain Thandeka and I struggled to differentiate her from the chaos of life she stood immersed in. I wrestled her all year long. Thandeka was my introduction to academic art at Rhodes University, Grahamstown in 1993.<sup>78</sup> Along with plaster casts, which were copies of Greek, Roman and Renaissance sculpture, life drawing was critical to fine art training. As a first-year art student I spent hours toiling in front of my easel.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Rhodes University was named after Cecil John Rhodes, British industrialist and mining magnate. Grahamstown was a historic town established as a colonial town by the 1820 Settlers. It is built on a natural basin. The town is racially split in two halves. Whites live in the lush dip and surrounding areas and the black township is on the hot, arid peripheries. When I was studying at Rhodes from 1993-1995 Grahamstown had an unemployment rate of sixty percent amongst black residents. Most of the white inhabitants are employed by Rhodes University (UCKAR – University currently known as Rhodes) and a number of private boarding schools. The black residents who are employed work at the university and at schools as support staff.

<sup>79</sup> Mary Coombes, a close friend and collaborator, was with me at Rhodes University's art school. Mary kindly allowed me to use her life drawing for this Chapter. Sadly, mine were either lost or thrown away, I wish now that I had kept them. I am so happy that Mary kept hers. I see them as truly beautiful now that I can separate them from the anguish of the art studio. Both Mary and I stopped the fine art program after the end of our second year. After we learnt the 'art of seeing' the realities of the department became stifling. A department consisting entirely of conservative white men felt we were challenging their authority. This is laughable given that we were kids of not yet twenty. But they were set in their ways would not allow us to collaborate on our numerous art crits. Every couple of weeks, art students would have to produce something for the departmental heads to criticise. Influenced by artists and art movements we saw in progressive art magazines such as *Raw Vision*, which focused on outsider art, Mary and I worked together. We made enormous installations and installed them in and around the art department. Most of them were about seeing the world that was around us instead of focusing on what had very little or no bearing on our lives. I was frustrated with young art students producing work that was self-indulgent with no basis in real life experience. At first our works were welcomed by the department but when they realised that we intended to continue collaborating they put a stop to it by splitting our marks without warning. In the beginning we would get 80% and we started getting 40%. The department used our marks as a bargaining chip. Either conform to the system or fail the program. We opted to leave, leaving what we loved but with our dignity intact. Those installations were tremendous, so optimistic and hopeful, bigger than the sad art department we found ourselves in at the end of apartheid. Mary's drawing are triumphant in the same way, they show her emerging victorious.

Michelangelo's 'dying slave' was tame compared to Thandeka. He was languid and absurdly self-pleasuring in his dying breath. I could easily gaze on that dull plaster and on his hand suggestively disappearing beneath his bandage. Thandeka's presence was disquieting. She did not absorb my gaze the way the 'dying slave' copy did. She was as still and silent as a plaster cast but she had spirit, strength and purpose. I found her intimidating, this silent black woman with her uncompromising stare and proudly tilted chin.

In life drawing you copied what was in front of you and your unique fingerprint and identity was inscribed on the page. This unique quality showed the sacred journey between the physicality of the model and her appearance on your paper. It showed how you internalised her body through your eyes and controlled her through your intellect. In this way, you made her image your own. The laborious task of drawing Thandeka was submitting the physicality of her body to the will of your artistic individuality. Developing artistic individuality was critical to becoming an artist. In order to attain it an art student had to learn control. Drawing was an act of control and submission. I had to control a wayward hand, a wayward eye and a wayward mind. I submitted the model to my intellectual control too. This kind of control and self-domination was praised and normalised in art school. It was only through intellectual struggle and control that an art student's artistry could be developed. Academic art was about the fluidity between the eye, the heart and hand. It was a very personal, private exposure that laid the inner processes, or lack thereof, of the art students bare. It is ironic that this process happened while students stood clothed and an impoverished virtually nameless black woman stood naked. We used Thandeka's body. The fact that we were using her for our intellectual enterprise made it acceptable and justifiable.

As young art students we expected art school to include life drawing, it was the kind of thing that was part of popular culture on film and TV.<sup>80</sup> Although it was surprising to see a completely naked stranger for the first time, we didn't anticipate the strange reality of being clothed and drawing a naked woman. We were also unaware of the deep disparities of the academic system.



Figure 39: Mary Coombes, *Miriam*. 1993.

---

<sup>80</sup> See: Rowan Atkinson, in 'Back to school Mr Bean' (1994). In this episode, Mr Bean is embarrassed by the attractive blond model in life drawing at Art School. Bean attempts to hide behind his drawing board to avoid looking at the models' exposed breasts. A stark difference between the model in Mr Bean and Thandeka is that Bean's model is literally sitting on a pedestal, reserved for displays of still life. She is sitting comfortably and is relaxed. This naked white woman owns her space and her posture shows that she is proud of her body. However, she does not react when a young child blunders into the class with his mother, and neither does she stop Bean from placing wet clay bowls over her breasts. She simply sits there looking confused. This raises questions about the naked female model more generally and their relationship to those in authority.

Life drawing was fundamental to a classical art education. Besides the practical task of seeing what was before you and placing the model's body on the paper, doing a life drawing 'well' was mysterious. The spark and mystery turned an art student into an Artist. It was not based on hard work alone. It was something you had or didn't have. George Coutouvidis, our drawing master, treated it as a gift from the gods.

The best drawings were of Thandeka arising from that white paper in proud black solidity as a shadow from a field of snow. It was her body but bore the fingerprint and raw identity of the art student. Students such as these would be praised and all those less praiseworthy, such as myself, would crowd around these drawings trying to glimpse the magic. I learnt that it wasn't about copying what was in front of you, it was about copying and adding your identity. We would talk about these remarkable works outside class in awe. What made a good piece however was clearly prescribed. A talented artist fit into clearly defined parameters that were set out by the history of western art. This was reinforced by our art history syllabus.



Figure 40: Mary Coombes, *Roman General Plaster Cast*. 1993.

## 5.2 The art history syllabus

At Rhodes University we were taught a survey of western art mainly from Helen Gardner's *Arts through the Ages* (1926). Our history of art classes took place in a dark lecture room and thousands of slides passed before us. It didn't help that slides don't do justice to actual colour or size of a work. Everything was equally technicolour and monumental. Both a pietà and a belt buckle were the same size. It gave those slides an aura that made them special but eventually made them redundant because they were so ubiquitous. Artworks were all bright and large. Although we had a general idea of their historical setting, the richness of their time was stripped away. The art work in isolation held all our attention.

We started with a brief mention of the French caves of Lascaux and European rock art, we moved to Egyptian art (which was somehow considered European not African) then to medieval Christian icons. Finally, and with great relief from a class tired of those endless slides of sad Virgin Marys, western art reached its apex in the Italian Renaissance. Here we focused on Vasari's *'Lives of the artist'* and the analysis of individual artistic genius. We focused on stylistic qualities so that we could evaluate how good a particular art work was. We applied a formal tool kit to the artwork and analysed it, dissected it in our minds to see how it all worked, evaluated it and wrote about it. The best art was the art of the genius that produced a masterpiece.

We had one African Art class per week on a Thursday afternoon. The lecturer was as miserable to teach it, as we were to listen to it. I made sure to sit next to the slide machine on a Thursday afternoon so that the loud click of the slides changing could keep me awake. We studied African Art as ethnography, as a description of customs. The 'art' of mostly West Africans were seen as a product of their culture. In this way, African art was linked to certain 'cults', festivals and masquerades. These gave rise to their artistic production of masks and 'fetishes'. We did not encounter the cities or urban centres of West Africa, only grass huts and wild dancing people. We were shown an image of Africa as black, wild, slightly menacing and backward. How fortunate we were to be in South Africa! We were so civilised compared to those Africans. It is ironic that this impression was from a Muslim girl such as myself who had to get her Catholic friend to explain catechism and the Eucharist. So much of western art history was connected to the religious iconography of Catholicism. It is bizarre to think that the 'art' of Africa was truly more alien to us than Roman Generals, Renaissance frescoes or seventeenth century Dutch landscapes. Yet it is less strange when you consider that at university we were taught to imagine ourselves as European, as the great artists we learnt about, and to be grateful for being part of an illustrious legacy and long tradition.



Art Historian Anitra Nettleton (2006) writes about Art History departments in South Africa and suggests that departments across the country shared certain traits. Art history was generally treated as secondary but complementary to art practice. Universities were divided along race and linguistic lines and closed to black students from 1959. English speaking universities such as Rhodes, the University of Cape Town, the University of Natal and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) all shared a similar syllabus of the survey of western art. Afrikaans universities included a larger component of South African art produced by white artists, in a bid to entrench a national culture. English speaking universities considered themselves superior to Afrikaans universities because they appropriated the forms of British institutions such as the Royal Academy or the Courtauld Institute.<sup>81</sup> While English Universities followed a more formalist tradition with less theoretical underpinnings, Afrikaans universities worked within the German Kunsthistorisches theoretical tradition. This was because Afrikaans universities felt that they had a shared lineage with Germany and the Netherlands.<sup>82</sup>

There were only two black universities that offered art, Fort Hare and North West and they did not teach art history. Instead, they had a teaching collection of art assembled by anthropologist E.J de Jager.<sup>83</sup> Nettleton (2006:42) concedes that this was because under apartheid, black people were intended to do manual labour and work with their hands not their minds. In order to fulfil this stereotype, black people needed to copy examples of craft. For the apartheid state, African art was craft and 'fine art' was white. Elevating African craft to art would threaten the status quo. Nettleton acknowledges that the almost exclusive

---

<sup>81</sup> Wits had a long association with the Courtauld Institute going back to the 1940's. The first professor of fine arts at Wits was Heather Martienssen. She graduated with a PhD from the Courtauld in 1947 (Nettleton, 2006:49).

<sup>82</sup> These can be seen in Annual reports of the National Department of Education and Culture in the 1980's where there is a demonstration of the connections between South Africa and German and Netherlands institutions.

<sup>83</sup> It is interesting that Professor E.J de Jager also assembled an extensive collection of contemporary black art (Nettleton, 2006).

focus on European art at white universities functioned to entrench the racial superiority of whites – not only their perception of the apartheid system, but also of the colonial context that preceded it. This was especially emphasised since the ‘great tradition’ was European art and everything else was largely ignored or disparaged.

At white universities art history supported art practice with the purpose of producing artists who were well versed in the European art canon. The implicit message was that European art was good art. Nettleton (2006) has shown that art departments at universities were founded as part of a larger civilising mission. Differentiation was an important part of civilising. Art was used as a differentiator; European culture was imitated and deemed as different and superior to African culture, which was considered backward and even alien. Black South African art was completely non-existent at Rhodes. This was because black people were perceived by those who developed the curriculum and who taught the courses to be without artistic ability, they worked with their hands doing manual labour and were therefore not part of a story of art.



Figure 41: Mary Coombes, *Thandeka*. 1993.

### 5.3 The black model in the white art studio

The presence of black life models in our art studio, contradicted the absurd idea that the white art world existed apart from the black world. It was a sad irony of life under apartheid. The apartheid state proclaimed that racial groups be separated and ‘develop’ alongside one another. Whites, exploited their position of authority so that they alone could thrive. Separate development benefitted whites and art was part of a white world. In this way art school entrenched ideas of difference. In the case of Thandeka, working as a life model showed her economic desperation. Models worked once a week and were paid R25 per session. At the time, it could get a very meagre grocery basket.

Thandeka undressed facing the wall showing a misplaced sense of modesty. I felt guilty watching her undress not understanding why. We sharpened our pencils. Her clothes were clean and pressed. She always wore skirts or dresses. For me the saddest things were her underwear, worn thin, elastic bands exposed. Sad traces of her identity. Her beige slip. Pale beige slips or skin colour slips which weren’t

'skin' colour at all, especially not for a black woman. A slip is something old-fashioned, worn by ladies and matrons. It serves no practical purpose beyond modesty. It speaks of adhering to social codes. My own mother for example was not allowed to wear a slip until she was a woman. It speaks of a woman proudly holding on to her sense of self, despite being dreadfully poor. She folded her slip in the same way she folded her clean clothes, neatly and carefully. She put her clean clothes on the dirty floor every week.

Thandeka had unbraided hair, her afro waxed and waned as the months passed. I noticed that she was pregnant. George never mentioned it, although he asked her more frequently if she wanted a rest every twenty-five minutes. She hardly ever did. She never showed strain from back pain or had swollen ankles, she never showed any signs of fatigue although I know now that she must have felt them. My drawings tracked her pregnancy. I had never seen a woman's body mould itself to another life in this way. It felt as if we, Thandeka and the class, were all journeying toward something together. The class and our changing drawings were journeying alongside Thandeka and her ever expanding belly. Thandeka stood still, always in the same pose, belly expanding her chin lifted staring proudly ahead.

Thandeka was gone for two weeks and sent a nameless man to take her place. He was an older coloured man, unusually small and barrel-chested. I could see that he was used to working with his strong hands, out in the sun. He stood there surrounded by students hidden behind drawing boards, students walking around him, under the glaring florescent light. He took off his shirt and stood there proudly, chest lifted shoulders back. He wore old baggy brown combat pants. He made me think of those stories of Bushman trackers out in the Kalahari desert, tracking the land for insurgents and land mines on the borders of South Africa. He made a sad caricature of the proud army General.

George went up to him and asked him to remove his pants. He shook his head emphatically 'no' still striking the pose. He looked at us questioningly and inhaled into that strong barrel chest. He needed to know what this work entailed but soon he started shaking uncontrollably and sweating. He looked terrified. He posed for some time but eventually George gently told him that he could go. I was moved by that man who was small and looked emotionally frail. Class members whispered that he was probably an alcoholic implying that coloureds like to drink. He reminded me of my grandfather. It wasn't too far a stretch. My grandfather wouldn't have dropped his pants either. He would've stood there small, brown and proud with his bricklayers hands. It seems that I only responded to the male model because he seemed familiar. Perhaps this is the enduring legacy of apartheid. Physical appearance determined how we relate to others emotionally. We were conditioned to relate to people of our own skin colour.

After just two weeks Thandeka returned to the studio. She was glowing, happy and carrying her tiny baby in her arms. She held her baby proudly, tight to her chest. And then she placed that new two week old baby on the dusty cold floor, next to her clothes, like a kitten. Thandeka stood before us wearing a large sanitary towel. I wanted to cry. I wanted to cry at how hard and ugly this life was. At how a proud woman had to lay herself bare this way. When her baby cried Thandeka picked her up, fed her and lay her back on the floor again. When Thandeka herself needed a rest, she sat down naked on the floor. Figure 40 shows Thandeka resting like this. I can't remember her speaking, or showing emotion and she never met our eyes or looked at our drawings. She knew what was expected and what was possible. I started to understand the latent brutality of the academic system better. The journey was not ours, hers and mine as we tracked Thandeka's pregnancy, it was not an artistic or academic exercise. Thandeka's journey started many hours before she stood naked before us. The imbalances of power made Thandeka's journey desperate and humiliating and

ugly. Force of circumstances combined with a brutal and State system that dehumanised innocents.

The nature of the academic system demanded that the development of individual artistic endeavour be at the cost of a social or human awareness. This was at the heart of the problem. The system praised individual effort, selfish effort. In this system, black women were objects in the same way plaster casts were. In this way, the academic system became the site for racial and gendered exploitation. Treating a black woman with dignity was neither necessary nor academically useful.

Toward year-end Thandeka started sending another model more frequently. There did not seem to be any formal arrangement with Thandeka. It was piecemeal work, and she was paid for work done. There were no terms of employment or contract. Miriam was older and her body looked tired, her posture was stooped. My friend Mary Coombes commented wryly that following Thandeka all the faces she drew resembled Thandeka. We learnt to draw from Thandeka's body. Thandeka had etched herself into our minds eye. All faces first became her face. All bodies first become her body. The black female body was where all our life drawing came from. The cornerstone of white art at art school was located in the body of the black woman.

It is revelatory that in second year after learning the basics of life drawing with the body of a black woman we 'graduated' from life drawing to anatomy. The body of the black woman was replaced by the body of a white man. Pierre was a MA painting student who was also house warden at one of the male residences. He was well placed if not respected within the university. He therefore claimed a kind of authority. Pierre strutted into the middle of the class in his silk robe and exposed himself theatrically, as if he was going for a nude skinny dip. He allowed the silk to pool around his feet. He always wore a self-important expression and came around to look at our drawings to see if we got him just right. The

experience with Pierre demonstrated that nudity itself was not a criterion for humiliation and self-denigration. In the case of our black models, the fact that our models were naked only added to an already shameful situation. This was the shamefulness of life for black women under apartheid. Part of the success of that dehumanising political system was normalising the ill treatment of people who were not white.



Figure 42: Mary Coombes, *Elgin Marbles Plaster Cast*. 1993.

#### 5.4 Encountering the black female body and playing at having a white eye

The ways in which black people, black experience were positioned and subjected in the dominant regimes of representation were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalization. Not only in Said's orientalist sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as 'other'... it is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge' not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, but by the power of inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the norm. (Hall, 1990: 225)



Drawing on Edward Said (1978) and Frantz Fanon (1952), Stuart Hall (1990) looks at how black people and black experience were positioned through representation by the dominant regimes of power. The way difference is constructed is the effects of cultural power. Hall suggests that cultural power works to instil categories of knowledge and defines the colonial subject in particular ways. One of the ways of constructing the black experience by the dominant power is by describing and realising the subject as different and 'other'. This is an outward and clear sign of domination and control. In this sense, the colonial subject realises that he/she is defined as different. It is an imposed category. However, far more insidious and perhaps more enduring is the normalisation of Othering. Hall suggests that the colonial power had the power to make the subject experience the 'other' as an internal process of confirmation. This means that a colonial subject internalised such domination by a sense of inner compulsion and conforms to it willingly. That is, believing and internalising that you (as a subject) are who they say you are.

I was a middle-class coloured young woman from Cape Town. I grew up in a coloured group area and went to neighbourhood schools. I came from a close extended family and lived within walking distance from my maternal grandmother. My mother had left school as a child to help support her family. My father was the first in his family to graduate from high school and university, he had moved from a rural town, Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape to Cape Town. I was born in Uitenhage and moved to Cape Town with my family. During my father's studies, I spent a few years in London, so I realised that my schools in Cape Town were racially segregated. I had young uncles on my mother's side of the family who were active in the anti-apartheid struggle so I was exposed to liberation ideas. In order to get a matric exemption to attend university I was

lucky enough to attend a cram college outside my group area for two years.<sup>84</sup> I had therefore been exposed early on to alternative learning environments. During the transition from apartheid rule in 1993 Rhodes University was still conservative in an English sense and predominantly white. The university still had strong ties with the old 'Rhodesia' and consequently there were many, mostly white, students from Zimbabwe.

My response to Thandeka was a symptom of growing up in apartheid and of internalising racism and difference. In the art studio, it was about claiming white knowledge as worthwhile. I only realised the inherent disparities of our life models' working conditions after they became too obvious to ignore. In an institution with a strong colonial history, established to promote white art, claiming a white identity was part of the process. It followed that in order to be successful you had to be white. I was an anomaly in that class and I often felt that way. I felt that I was too big and too loud and too brown to conform to the academic system although I sincerely wanted to do so.

The black man wants to be like the white man, for the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white. Long ago the black man admitted the unarguable superiority of the white man, and all his efforts are aimed at achieving a white existence. (Fanon, 1952:228)

The quote above by Fanon has special relevance to my situation, although it refers to the experiences of the black man. The only way to do academic art during apartheid was by achieving a white eye, looking at your subject as a white person. This entailed blocking natural responses when witnessing the obvious degradation of our life model. The learning process was concentrating on the academic activity. The academic exercise was scientific and neutral. As a result, I needed to ignore the signs of Thandeka's identity. I was to ignore her defiant gaze, her worn out underclothes and her baby on the dirty floor.

---

<sup>84</sup> Cram colleges were private institutions outside the formal government school system. They were established to assist students to get a matric during and following the disruptive apartheid states of emergencies of the 1980's.

In order to be successful in the colonial academic system, I needed to cultivate my own colonial gaze and subject Thandeka to it. This involved silencing myself and consciously moving to who I wanted to become, an artist with a white eye. A discussion of Thandeka and indeed the construction of the white art world more generally cannot be had without a discussion of whiteness and the female nude in the art studio. British art academies justified the extensive use of drawing as a foundation for classical art training. It is therefore not insignificant that plaster casts and black bodies were the foundation of art training at Rhodes. The art syllabus of the white plaster cast and the black body combined these two completely unrelated forms. The casts were the imported and desired dying remnant of colonial culture. The nude model was local and degraded through that very process of colonialism. By combining this binary, art training showed that the white artist needed to master both antiquity and the native.



Figure 43: Mary Coombes, *Miriam*. 1993.

### 5.5 Apartheid and the black body

By September of that year black students supported protesting workers. They protested the poor working conditions and low wages. Young black men stormed the art studio. They found Miriam, naked and looking surprised and then annoyed. I remember a young man approaching her, furtively looking for something to cover her with. He called her 'mother' and tried to cover her with a dirty white sheet. He hung that large dirty sheet over her shoulders like a cloak. Miriam pulled away. Other men followed and shook their heads, looking in shame at the floor. But Miriam was angry and defiant. She looked as if she didn't appreciate being man-handled by a bunch of kids. Since she was old enough to be their mother she also wanted to reserve the right to do as she pleased. Miriam returned the following week and George covered the windows with drawing

boards so that she could not be seen from the outside. She would have ordinarily been seen by passers-by.

Normalisation in apartheid society was a powerful force. This meant that obvious inequalities were overlooked when they fell into recognisable frames of reference. So, for example, black people in general were treated as an amorphous group by the apartheid government. Furthermore, untrained labourers were the worst paid and worst treated and had no rights. Black women in turn were the most demeaned and humiliated under apartheid. Their only function, if any at all, was to create a comfortable domestic sphere for whites. Domestic chores and white child rearing were part of acceptable black work. Nude modelling would be less acceptable in a black woman's own community. In a conservative Xhosa Christian context such as Grahamstown it would have been accompanied by a degree of shame.

In this context, the black female body is seen as part of a productive discourse of power. This is the power of the white university to employ cheap models, in a context of limited employment and to treat them without dignity. It is also the power of young black men who demand that black matrons behave in a certain way. The models themselves did not speak for themselves and their voices are not heard. Although perhaps by returning to the site of her humiliation before black young men Miriam says something after all. Perhaps she says that her body is her own.

In the scientific field, the body of the black woman was examined extensively ignoring the agency of the black woman over her own body. While the use of the bodies of black women in European science has been studied extensively, I will discuss the place of black women's bodies in the South African academy.

## 5.6 The black body and the pursuit of knowledge



Figure 44: *Eugen Fischer looking at Rehoboth Baster photographs, 1938.*

I struggled to include Figure 44 because it made me feel physically ill and very sad. I found it in an article describing Fischer's *Volkekunde* toolkit found at the University of Stellenbosch in 2015. If an image does violence then this is it. Sitting in his lab, in his white lab coat, one of the founders of the Eugenics movement, Eugen Fisher studies the photographs of black women. The young girl whose picture he holds stares ahead, the black framed portrait in the distance looks away from the camera in a profile view. These photographs were instruments of racial profiling not portraits or personal mementoes of loved ones. When I see anthropological mug shots like these I always think of the suppressed backstories of the sitters. How were people convinced to sit for such photographs? How were they decontextualized from their environment to make the portraits appear uniform, scientific. I wonder how white men such as Fischer could categorise human beings as if they were butterflies or beetles. I wonder how a supposedly intelligent man like Fischer, could think that the young girl he held in his hand before him could be backward, stupid and depraved compared to the white girls he knew. I wonder how he could subject innocents to his intellectual violence. I know however that entire nations followed men like him, not least the apartheid state.

Eugenics aimed at improving genetic qualities in populations. It caused terror and legalised genocide across the world. In South Africa, it influenced apartheid policies and since Fischer's work studies mixed race people in Namibia, had a particular influence on the state's policies regarding coloured people. This photograph demonstrates the very real cross over of academia with political policy and social reality. It demonstrates the violence of academia, the way a black woman and child can be silenced and frozen in a photographic frame forever. The way science and white men have constructed our reality without conscience. It is pure evil, not something sitting safely in the past. It is about how science constructed and normalised the parameters of monstrosity.



South Africa has an enduring legacy of using black people as subjects for white academic pursuit. Sometimes this was done in direct collusion with the State, at other times it was done in a more oblique way that nonetheless supported the status quo. The Afrikaans University of Pretoria's *Volkekunde* (anthropology) department, for example, assisted the apartheid government with separate development by drawing up the tests required for racial classification.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, the University of Stellenbosch's *Volkekunde* department collaborated with the apartheid state in the same way. This relationship surfaced again in February 2013 when a skull and *Volkekunde* 'toolkits' used for classifying eye and hair colour were discovered in the storage rooms at the Sasol Museum at Stellenbosch University. The skull was originally from the university's anatomy department. The hair colour chart was in a silver container with Professor Dr Eugen Fischer's name engraved on it.<sup>86</sup>

This racial artefact tells of the global flow of racist systems of knowledge. Its presence shows how race was made scientific, how the study of race acted to

---

<sup>85</sup> These were schemes of skin colour and hair texture. It was used during apartheid to determine the race of an individual. It had a particularly insidious role in the Group Areas Act set in motion from the 1960's to the 1980's.

<sup>86</sup> In 1908 Eugen Fischer began his study of Rehoboth Bastards. Rehoboth is an area in Namibia. The term 'Baster' is a term that is historically derogatory and denotes mixed race. However, the Rehoboth Bastards have now taken ownership of the term. Fischer, an anatomist and physical anthropologist studied 310 Rehoboth Bastards of mixed Boer, German and indigenous Nama ancestry, these people were termed *Mieschling* or of mixed race. He used genealogical sources, photographs, eye and hair colour charts, and head and body measurements to investigate whether the 'interbreeding' of peoples of different races would result in a new type of mixed race. The use of the term 'interbreeding' gives insight that he thought of his subjects as little more than animals. Fischer also wanted to know which racial characteristics were dominant and how new environments affected emigrant races. Finally, Fischer was interested in whether the fertility of mixed race people was impaired. Fischer's findings, which were published in 1913 in a book entitled *The Bastards of Rehoboth and the Problem of Miscegenation in Man*. The book concluded with recommendations for colonial policy. Fischer called for a strict prohibition on mixed marriages in the colonies. These recommendations influenced Nazi policies to promote 'the protection of German blood and honour.' This was done through the Nazi Marriage Act of 1935 and what came to be known as the Nuremberg Laws. Fischer's Rehoboth findings were also later used to justify classifying 'foreign races' in Nazi Germany. Advocates of eugenics also claimed to have solid scientific evidence that recessive genes of racially mixed populations ultimately contributed to physiological, psychological and intellectual degeneration. The Rehoboth study launched Fischer's successful scientific career in Germany. Hitler read his work in 1923 and cited him favourably in *Mein Kampf*. By the late 1920's, Fischer had become a leading figure in an international racial hygiene and eugenics movement (Robins, 2013).

differentiate the ruler from ruled, the colonizer from the colonised. It helped construct and validate apartheid laws.<sup>87</sup>

In South Africa, people of colour were differentiated along racial groups with a focus on cultural affinities. Kinship patterns were studied and consequently artificial homelands were established under the leadership of local, state-funded leaders. The creation of homelands was a cornerstone of apartheid and controlled the movement of black labour to urban centres (Posel, 1991). In this way, urban areas were to remain white but could also prosper by a mobile black labour-force. Black labourers had to journey back and forth from their place of work to their living quarters at the peripheries of cities. Families were torn apart as men went to cities to work and lived in hostels. Black men were often housed outside the city limits, while their families stayed behind in homelands (Murray & Witz, 2014). In urban centres, meanwhile the same racial classifications were used to delineate Group Areas. In this way, racial groups defined living areas. During apartheid, areas and suburbs were forcibly split apart. This allowed whites to live in the best areas while blacks, coloureds and Indians were relocated to the borders of cities in newly created ghettos and townships.<sup>88</sup>

Audre Lorde's poem 'A litany of survival' speaks to women of colour living on the borders or outskirts of society. Lorde identifies with these experiences, and she articulates a deep understanding of what it means to live on the outside. Lorde's poem has me looking at the silent photo of the girl with the thick neat plaits Fischer holds in his hands. Lorde's poem makes me want to reach inside the photograph and ask the girl to speak. It makes me want to listen to who she is and how she came to be there. It makes me want to tell her that her hair and her

---

<sup>87</sup> See: article concerning the recent discovery of a coloured woman's remains at Stellenbosch University. (Peta Lee, 2013)

<sup>88</sup> The most well know instance of forced removals in Cape Town is District Six. It was established in 1867 as an area of freed slaves, merchants, artisans, labourers' and immigrants. District Six was vibrant and diverse with a rich music, art and performative arts scene. The area was declared a white group area in 1966 and 60,000 people were forcibly removed to outlying districts. The area was razed to the ground and the physical spaces of a community were flattened. The District Six Museum memorialises the district and forced removals more generally as seen in Chapter 3.

eyes and her skin and her smile are beautiful. Looking into her eyes makes me feel less sad. She is a girl with a heart, with a history, with a life, with trust in her smile. Looking at her makes me want to ask her to share her voice with me across the oceans of time.

### **A litany of Survival**

For those of us who live at the shoreline  
standing upon the constant edges of decision  
crucial and alone  
for those of us who cannot indulge  
the passing dreams of choice  
who love in doorways coming and going  
in the hours between dawns  
looking inward and outward  
at once before and after  
seeking a now that can breed  
futures  
like bread in our children's mouths  
so their dreams will not reflect the death of ours:

For those of us  
who were imprinted with fear  
like a faint line in the center of our foreheads  
learning to be afraid with our mother's milk  
for by this weapon this illusion of some safety to be found  
the heavy-footed hoped to silence us  
For all of us  
this instant and this triumph  
We were never meant to survive.

Audre Lorde (extract) 1978

### **5.7 Invisibility and silence on the fringes**

My experiences at Rhodes art school and Pretoria University were shaped by fear. After leaving Rhodes in 1994 and starting Pretoria in 1995 fear was my inheritance. It has a longer history. Fear was instilled during a childhood growing up during apartheid in us all: black, white and those placed in between, coloureds. Fear was the weapon used against us. There were different kinds of fear, for blacks and coloureds it was the insidious state power and control. It was

knowing that something unseen and entirely self-serving shaped your existence. Fear crept along the axis of your life, it shaped your past and would shape your future. It dictated how you came to live where you lived, go to the schools you went to, have the friends you had. Like my mother and all my grandmothers before, it did not allow women to indulge in dreams of the future, women's dreams were to die along with the bread of necessity pressed into the mouths of siblings and children. Fear would place black women on the edges of life with no future except immediate survival.

For whites, fear was constructed elaborately. Fear was the '*swart gevaar*' or the black danger. This was the paranoia surrounding the *Other* constructed by the apartheid state and colonial State before. The State wove a fiction of black abjection (Enwezor, 1999:377). In this fiction blacks were inherently poor, wretched, degenerate and hopeless. The state negated its own part in the construction of black lives and worked to maintain this fiction. The state made blacks all the things it accused blacks of inherently being. The *swart gevaar* is the under belly of the fiction of black abjection. In this story, black subjects are enraged and comes for the white 'citizen' in his home. They kill the men and rape the women. It is the savage breaking free, breaking his bonds, returning to the surface, reclaiming what is his and degrading the white *baas* as the black man himself has been degraded. It is the story of white male paranoia, or privilege stripped of being rendered emasculated and impotent. The black woman does not fit into this discourse of reclamation and emasculation, it is a story crafted by white men and is about their fears. The black woman is absent, quiet, reliable and long suffering. Perhaps in the story she will come into her domestic work after the cataclysmic event and reliably clean up the mess.

Iconic theatre productions such as Sibikwa Players', *Wathint' Abafazi*, *Wathint' Imbokodo* (You Strike a Woman, You Strike a Rock) of the late 1980's was created out of the experiences of black women and countered the myth of the silent, demeaned black woman (Larllham, 2007:182). It was seen by mostly white

audiences throughout the country. The play brings the stories of three women to the stage as they endure long bus rides from Transkei to Cape Town looking for work, caring for children and working in the houses of whites. The play asks that audiences open their eyes to the reality of black women's lives. However, there was a multitude of black women's experiences that could not be scripted and most realities of the lives of black women could not be staged. How do you represent fear without reviving the force of its power?

In fear, I navigated white institutional spaces. I tried to fall under the radar, trying not to be seen and trying not to be heard. I felt that I had been careless with myself at Rhodes art school but I had learnt my lesson. I realised very consciously that studying art made me too visible. I felt beaten and bruised by the system. I opted instead to study in the humanities faculty: Art History, English, Anthropology, and Archaeology at the University of Pretoria. I had left Rhodes, was recently married to Ross, who had been studying Geology while I was studying art. I realised belatedly that it was even more difficult for a coloured woman to be invisible alongside a white man, with people thinking that he was sponsoring my studies and that I had married him for his money! Apart, I waged different battles. Hyper visible when we were together I relished invisibility when we were apart. At university, I armed myself with silence hoping for invisibility and safety. I attempted to create the 'illusion of safety' Lorde so powerfully writes of.

The illusion of safety worked both ways. When I was at home and surrounded by the people I loved, being seen was not a problem. The state created the illusion that we were safe as long as we were surrounded by people like us, in our segregated areas. This was not true. Fear of the state permeated even 'safe' spaces. As a child, there were things I could not speak of. My grandmother would cover my mouth with her pale tapered fingers, shake her head when I asked her where my youngest uncle had disappeared to, when he would return. My

grandmother's hand along with my mother's milk taught me to be afraid. Both etched the 'line of worry' into my forehead as the fear surrounded us all.

When I entered white institutions, I knew fear of a new kind. A blinding white fear. Fear with a smell (dry paper and old ink). Fear that runs down your back. It is not just that you don't belong. It is realizing that you are being worked out, expelled in a multitude of different ways. In white spaces, there was an antagonism against people of colour and an ownership by whites. It did not close the door, no sign kept me out, instead it let me in, enrolled me, let me pay through my humiliation. These spaces made me feel degraded and alone. Entering scarred me. I carry the scars traced down my back, the scars of the sweat of fear and humiliation.

Art school and university constructed exclusion in different ways. At Rhodes, both my friend and I, Mary Coombes, were systematically driven out because we collaborated on projects and so defied the idea of the individual artist, it was also troubling for those in authority that we were friends in the first place. In first year art history, I was told that my handwriting was too big, to get better grades I needed to 'cultivate' smaller handwriting. I was sent to academic support to help me with my handwriting. At Pretoria, things became more overtly racist.

In anthropology, we were taught that black brains were smaller than white brains. Apparently, the size of your brain determined your intelligence so black people were scientifically proven as stupid. The Head of the anthropology department demonstrated this by singling out black women. His hands gripped their desks, his knuckles white he shouted in Afrikaans, his face burning with anger and exertion. He leant over them spraying spit all over. I saw the hate shining over his face. I saw the fear in my flinching classmates. Prof did this to demonstrate that black people were stupid because black students couldn't understand Afrikaans 'Can't you understand, are you stupid, *dom?*' I used to sit in the front row heart beating in my throat waiting to be found out. To be startled

out of my silent existence to be forced to speak. Perhaps the Prof would make an example out of me, humiliate me. Perhaps he would show the class how much I didn't belong.

Archaeology lessons in the walk-in safe in the department, where we examined the trays of loot from the Mapungubwe dig in the Limpopo Province. Hidden in the department, we could pass around the more than 700-year-old finds of a prosperous black civilisation. The golden bowl, golden staff, golden beads and golden rhino. The theories from the Anthropology department didn't hold true in light of these precious ancient objects.

Throughout, there was an enduring hostility or a humourless bemusement that I thought I could be at university at all. Meanwhile, I worked as if fire was burning the soles of my feet. I could see black students falling around me like purple Jacaranda blossoms. I worked furiously to translate Afrikaans lectures into English notes going back to the English sources in the library. Although I came from Cape Town where my entire extended family spoke Afrikaans as a first language, Afrikaans in Pretoria was entirely impenetrable. This language was difficult to decipher. As I sat in the library and decoded my lecture notes I came to realise that the Afrikaans used in lectures was a performance of ownership. The language worked to secure the patrimony of the past on the shoulders of white men. In this way, Afrikaans was used in a performance of boundary drawing. It was the first step at university in differentiating those who belonged and who did not. Once I realised that the battle was over ownership, I relaxed, I didn't want *their* university. I would translate what I needed to, keep to myself and would leave as soon as I could.

In my first-year Humanities classes, there was a very small minority of black women. We were about four or five in a class of a few hundred. By second year the group of black students reduced by half, by the end of the degree there were precious few of us, numbers had dwindled to about one or two in a class of a



hundred whites. My experiences at South African universities in the 1990's show them to be battlefields. To ignore or deny this is to be complicit in the way these institutions manufactured exclusion. They did not keep people of colour out but they broke them down systematically in countless ways.

### **5.8 Unknown and isolated: black experiences in academia and the white art world**

It was difficult to find voices that shared my experience in the academy and art school. Black women on the outside, trying to make sense of a hostile academic and creative experience but wanting to be part of it, wanting to stake a claim to empowering knowledge. The black feminist movement in the United States found its voice in the 1970's. These women whose voices have echoed across oceans have given me a different inheritance, an inheritance based on strength not silence. South Africa and the United States share a similar history of marginalising black and minority women. Before the civil rights era, much like in South Africa, black women were subject to multiple forms of degradation and violence. Similarly, we share a history of slavery, segregation and resistance to oppression. Although the details of our histories differ there is a commonality in the sentiments of black women who struggled to break away from dominant forms of knowledge production in the white academy. Cheryl Clarke (2010) writes about the history of the movement, bell hooks (2014) writes about the academy in the United States, while Juliette Jarrett (1996) writes about art school in the United Kingdom.

The black feminist movement was galvanised by the foundational text, 'But some of us are brave' (1982). In this book, various black women came together to write about the experiences of being black, marginal and their role in the academy. Marginality encompassed race, gender, sexual preference and class. 'But some of us are brave' was wide ranging, containing poetry and prose but also syllabus

structures for university courses on black women's studies as well as interviews with women working in woman's aid organisations.

In her essay on the movement's development, Clarke pays special attention to the relationship of black feminism to the white academy. Referencing Hortense Spillers (2009) Clarke notes that transformation of the white academy resonated with the activism of the civil rights movements of the 1960's. Black feminism grew from trying to change the real lived condition of black women – it was therefore organised on the ground. Black feminist texts within the academy emerged to create new spaces of enunciation. These new spaces gave a platform to black, lesbian and feminist politics. Furthermore, there was a conscious distancing in the early years of the movement from the white academy and from white feminism. Andre Lorde, activist, lesbian and poet, believed that time spent in the white academy was time stolen from other pressing interests of black women. Instead Lorde wanted to meet members of the white academy when they treated her as equal. 'Lorde called for a strategic essentialism, demanding that we get in the streets and put the women of the race first' (Clarke, 2010:782). Furthermore, black feminist writers recognised many issues of systematic exclusion, of silence and invisibility. Before this project, I had never read these nor any other black South African authors at university.

Silence is a powerful action, after a damaging experience at Rhodes art school, I used silence to protect myself. The life models at Rhodes made me realise the power of silence. In a hostile environment both Thandeka and Miriam refused to give up the voice from inside themselves after already laying bare what was outside. But I discovered that there is an irony in silence. While it can make you look brave, and make it seem as if you are protecting yourself, silence can shape you as the subject into anything the speaker wants. When a black woman swallows those questions nobody thinks to ask, what it really manifests is not bravery but a woman choked by fear. I navigated the University of Pretoria silently because I did not want to expose myself and be brutalised again. I

believed that pretending to be invisible would protect me from further harm. In this way, I was grateful for the enormous lecture halls, first year English had eight hundred students! I was also grateful that students did not write their name on exam scripts. It was easier to be invisible as a number on an exam script, where nobody knew your name.

Writer and academic bell hooks (2014) who bravely refused to be silent and invisible, writes of the unbalanced environment of the white academy America as an English student in the 1970's.

While racist and sexist opinions were rarely directly stated, the message was conveyed through various humiliations that aimed at shaming students, at breaking our spirit. We were terrorised. As an undergraduate, I carefully avoided those professors who made it clear that the presence of any black students in their class was not desired...they communicated their messages in subtle ways...avoiding looking at you, pretending they do not hear you when you speak, and at time ignoring you altogether. (hooks, 2014:103)

hooks conveys the imbalances of power, the subtle subterfuge and the way a black woman's spirit is broken down. Her experiences of racism, sexism, shaming and humiliation in the academy speaks to Jarrett's (1996) experiences as an art student in London. Influenced by black feminism, Jarrett writes of her own and of other black women's experiences from the 1970's to 1980's. Her essay shows that much like American universities, art schools in London were also steeped in injustice and racial discrimination. Jarrett writes of the responses black women students developed to survive art training. Her piece is about stories of survival as young black women navigate a hostile terrain. It is clear that in this context black women are considered an anomaly. Black women are a presence that is endured by those in authority rather than nurtured or encouraged. It is important to note that the women she interviews for her piece affirm that it did not matter how they conducted themselves, whether they are bold and responsive or quiet and

acquiescent. They were always treated in a similar way. For Jarrett, art school was part of the broader social picture.

Art school became a site for the reproduction of social and political relations...in art school control is almost universally in the hands of white men... Race and sex oppression are inseparable historical experiences for us; for a black woman in an art school, resisting subordination and manipulation is not simply a matter of fighting male privilege or having a feminist consciousness. It seems likely that the problems black women face in art schools reflect the experiences of black women in higher education. (Jarrett, 1996: 127)

For Jarrett, the conditions inside the art school reflected conditions on the outside. In order to resist inequalities in art school black women needed to understand this. For Jarrett, a large part of the problem was reflected more generally in the academy as bell hooks shows. In the section that follows I return to my discussion of how female bodies are used within Fine Art departments and I contrast a photograph taken in Los Angeles in the 1920's with my own experience as a student in South Africa in the early 1990's. This will show how the black body was seen in relation to the white body in the art academy.

## 5.9 Appropriating the European life class: Los Angeles, USA



Figure 45: *George Stanley sculpture class. 1920's, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, California.*

A group photograph of George Stanley's sculpture class, at Otis college of Art and Design taken in the 1920's. Stanley stands third to the right, the dark-haired man closest to the model. Established in 1918, this American art college is an early example of appropriating of the classical academy teaching style further afield. In the context of a burgeoning film industry and related industries, life drawing was used in new ways. Instructor, Stanley, is the sculptor of the Oscar trophy, given annually by the American academy of motion pictures to its top achievers. Stanley was also responsible for various high profile sculptures connected to the film industry in and around Hollywood (Jarrett, 1975:14). The female nude therefore represented the currency of traditional ideas of art in a changing economic context.

Art historian Lynda Nead (1992) notes that classical western art education placed the female body within the secure frame of the conventions of high art. In this way, the female body could arouse in the viewer stillness and wholeness instead of sexual arousal. This was in contrast to the 'vulgar body'. The vulgar female body was associated with pornography and bad taste. In the context of Otis College, the classical female nude gave credibility to the young and popular industry of movies. Consequently, very few of the students pictured above went on to careers in fine arts, as artists or in museums. Instead these students became art directors in movies, set designers, advertisers, illustrators and interior decorators. Mary Jarrett, alumnus of Otis calls this high period in the history of the school the roaring twenties. It was a time when new careers for art students were flourishing and a commercialism of art was emerging. However, the art school had its roots in the classical past. The female nude helped it achieve a status of bridging the past and looking toward the technicolour future.

The small model, Vera sits tightly balanced on a precarious table.<sup>89</sup> The contraption she balances on seems to be a short table balanced on wooden stools. She sits on a piece of cloth that might be an old curtain. Her table is in a traditional art studio. Potters wheels have replaced easels but the paint covered surfaces speak of the varied use of the creative space. Her face is in shadow and her gaze is down in a contortion required only by life models and yogis. It is a closed pose used to emphasise the shapes and contrasts of her body. It is a pose used to contort and squeeze the female body. The pose is replicated in the clay sculptures behind her. The fold of her legs, the stretch across her back, the extension of her arm, the peep of her hand and the soft folds of her stomach. The pose makes her look demure and non-confrontational, her face behind her shoulder is in shadow and her gaze is lowered. She contrasts with the female students with their short, practical, frizzy, flapper-style bobs and confrontational

---

<sup>89</sup> The model's name emerged after personal communication with Sue Maberry Senior Director at the Millard Sheets Library, Otis College of Art and Design. I found this picture online when I accessed the Otis' library, their collection is open access and the librarians are helpful and forthcoming.

gazes. Vera's hair is styled tightly into a bun that covers her ears. She is an image of another time, speaking back to artist's models. She is a small, contorted ideal. The model sits surrounded by the mess of the packed art studio. Paint splatters surfaces and potter's wheels, as well as students, cram into the frame. The contrast of the chaotic packed studio and the naked model is stark and makes Vera look vulnerable. The only trace of her identity are her black leather shoes, standing beneath the table she sits on. They show her to be a woman of her time not a generic model her pose makes her appear to be.

Rhodes University in South Africa appropriated the classical style to entrench ideas of white art and racial difference. This shows the reach of the European academic system as well as the way it was reinterpreted and reinvented. The life model is a vehicle for the creative act. Vera, such as Thandeka is an object for learning. In the same way that the clay needs to be mastered so too does her body. She can be mastered through her pose. She is still, quiet, not herself, a generic type. In the 1920's the creative field in Hollywood was associated with a new commercialism around the film industry but the dynamics of mastery were rooted in a classical past. Having a precedent in the classical academies in Europe, Vera's form needs to be internalised and her shape made to emerge through the cold wet brute stuff of clay. Her body is the learning tool. It is apparent however, that black models such as Thandeka and the life models at Rhodes University were not employed in quite the same way. Their bodies were certainly used to express a form of mastery but it was not associated with the aesthetic qualities of that body. The life models at Rhodes never changed their poses, they also stood one leg before the other. Their bodies were not used to express a demeanour, show subtlety or beauty. They were not twisted and contorted to show a classical reference, instead they were used to show a physical type in its most simplistic form. All those drawings of Thandeka could be titled 'black woman standing', Vera however could be any number of classically inspired themes 'river nymph drying herself in the sun' or 'Ophelia mourning her lost love.' In both cases, the art school life drawing process shows the female



body as something contrived. The body is still, can be manipulated and bent to fit into a scheme. It is neither confrontational nor questioning. It is complaint. The female body is a physical presence that lacks distinctiveness in all but physical traits. The black female body in apartheid South Africa was limited even further because she did not fit in with the western classical scheme. Her gender was the only commonality she shared with white female nudes.

In Figure 45, the art students have identities, they look into the camera and in some instances, challenge its gaze. The presence of artists' smocks resonates with the lab coat worn by Eugen Fischer (Figure 44). This simple garment is heavy with meaning. It gives the art profession a credibility and seriousness usually reserved for science. It lends art an air of objective truth or neutrality characterised by the sciences. It also points to how both science and art have used neutrality to hide deeper more sinister activities. It is interesting that at least half the class, in Figure 45 are female. The seated woman on the left challenges the camera. Dressed in black with a grey artists' smock over her clothes she lifts her chin, showing that she has every right to belong, as much as the men do. Although the class is split with males to the left and females to the right, records of the art school show a large number of women students from the time of its establishment. However, there were few women teachers in the early years of the school and men held senior positions. It is also worthwhile to note, that men and women had separate life drawing classes from 1918-20 (Jarrett, 1975:14).

Nead (1992) writes on the presence of female nude in western art education. Since the Renaissance the standard training for art students was organised around three main principles: the antique, the life class and the study of anatomy. Drawing on classically inspired theories of art and Renaissance categories of rhetoric, academies such as the Royal Academy of Art in London classified art in a hierarchy of genres. Still life was at the bottom of the hierarchy and heroic subjects were on the top. Following Nead, art and art education was

therefore used in the early modern and modern periods to help form national identities. In this way, thriving national schools of painting were regarded as an index of a nation's power and prosperity, which would show mastery in the cultural domain. Nead mentions the fundamental importance of life drawing in art education. She claims that the female nude is not simply one subject in a wide range of subjects in the history of western art but rather that it is particularly significant within western art. The appeal of a woman's body as sexual was considered vulgar. Referring to life drawing more generally and more recently Nead (1992) quotes from a style manual on nude oil painting.

Avoid 'glamor' poses that exaggerate the models charms like a publicity photograph of a star. Such paintings tend to look like caricatures. For the same reason, don't exaggerate details like eyelashes, ruby lips, pink cheeks, painted fingernails or toenails. In general avoid all kinds of exaggeration. A nude figure in a natural, relaxed, harmonious pose is inherently beautiful. (Blake in Nead, 1992:54)

While the life drawing of Vera was classically inspired, she fit into the frame of a contained woman. If she exhibited more 'glamor' in her pose or adornment she would surpass the containment of the frame and be vulgar. Nude male models had no such restrictions, they could not be vulgar in the same way. In the context of Hollywood in the 1920's, in order for men to negotiate the presence of women in Hollywood she needed to be imagined in the past.

In contrast, the black female models at Rhodes University did not even make it into mimicking the classical past. They could not be imagined as fitting into a classical trope or be imagined as aesthetic. In life drawing class, it was never about instilling a feeling of beauty or referring back to the classical past. It was always about getting it right. Rhodes models were defined by science as racial types and they were adopted in this way by the art school. It is interesting that even in their 'natural' state they were not considered beautiful such as the nude model quoted above. There was too much of them, their bodies would not be

easily contained. White students often remarked on the size of Thandeka's buttocks. I never thought that it was especially large because I came from a racial group that had a wide variety of body shapes and a varied idea of what was normal. That did not mean however that the classical proportions of the white woman were not considered the ideal kind of body type for everyone. Perhaps being a white woman and having a classical body type facilitated access to the classical past.

### **5.10 The art school, university and art museum**

The art school and university system frames the art museum in South Africa. Shared ideas of inclusion and exclusion continue to permeate the boundaries of these powerful institutions. These institutions continue to carry the trajectory of white dominance from the colonial past into the postcolonial present. Art museums continue to perpetuate a white fiction of exclusivity, closing the space off in a multitude of ways to groups on the peripheries of society. Contesting these views, black and minority women have expressed ideas of black female subjectivity in various ways. These artists and writers have recognised their place in the colonial museum and have chosen to explore various ways to subvert it. They refused to re-inscribe white dominance but bravely use their own viewpoints, subjectivities and bodies to stage critical interventions in white spaces. They purposefully invert notions of white universality and racial superiority by subverting the power of the colonising image.

First is Leila Aboulela's (1997) short story about a student from Khartoum, Sudan, studying in Scotland. The museum reflects Shadia's feelings of alienation and isolation, as well as her yearning for freedom from social mores. The museum, an old fashioned cultural history museum, makes her realise that there are stories, which are untold, that the stories portrayed do not include women like herself. Concurrently however the museum makes her realise that she controls her own story. In contrast to Aboulela's short story of agency and desire thwarted is

Gabeba Baderoon's (2011) encounter in the South African National Gallery. Confronting Tracy Rose's photograph 'The kiss' Baderoon's experience is about claiming a sensual gaze. Both pieces are about the agency of looking. Here the black woman who is usually seen as a subject claims the act of looking in the white racially encoded space of the art museum. Finally, I look at some of the images from Berni's Searle's *Colour Me Series* (1998-2000) to show how the gaze is represented as confrontational.

### 5.11 Black women in the art museum

She touched the glass of the cabinet showing papyrus rolls, copper pots. She pressed her forehead and nose against the cool glass. If she could enter the cabinet, she would not make a good exhibit. She wasn't right, she was too modern, too full of mathematics...

only the carpet, its petroleum blue pleased her. She had come to this museum expecting sunlight and photographs of the Nile, something to relieve her homesickness: a comfort and message. But the messages were not for her, not for anyone like her.

'They are telling lies in this museum,' she said. 'Don't believe them. It's all wrong. Its not jungles and antelopes, its people. We have things like computers and cars. We have 7UP in Africa, and some people, a few people, have bathrooms with golden taps. I shouldn't be here with you. You shouldn't talk to me...'

(Leila Aboulela, 1997:17)

The catharsis of Aboulela's short story happens in front of the African exhibit in a Scottish cultural history museum. The culturally alienated Shadia, a student from Khartoum, visits the museum with Bryan, who is Scottish and intrigued by her. The gentle romance combined with a terror of the unknown and the desperate need for Shadia to express who she is, comes to a head before an exhibition of a lion hunt. The display of antelope herds and colonial guns represents a story of Africa that is foreign to Shadia, including the stories of colonial officials and biographies of explorers. However, the museum also represents the comfort she is accustomed to at home in Khartoum where she lives a life of genteel poverty.

The plush blue carpets are the best thing about the museum, which represents a burgeoning sensual awareness and she longs to feel it under her bare feet. This sensual awareness is also manifest in the forbidden time spent alone with a foreign boy.

The scene therefore, is about the conflict between different parts of Shadia's identity. There is the expectation of Sudanese society. Her fiancé, the soft drink and sanitary towel tycoon, Fareed who wants her to buy gold plated toilet seats in Scotland for their matrimonial home, contrasted with Brian who wants to know more about who she is. Another part of her identity is a projection of how the western world sees her and perhaps how she thinks Bryan sees her. Through the exhibitions of violence and war booty where 'nothing was of her, nothing belonged to her life...' (Aboulela, 1997:15). She is desperate to convey that Africa is civilised and not wild. Shadia expresses this as owned commodities cars, computers, and carbonated drinks.

Finally, there is the terrifying potential for creating a new identity with Bryan. Shadia eventually turns away from the terrifying potential of creating a life with Bryan and of creating an identity for herself. She is exhausted by the thought of what it would take to fashion a new identity for them both. Instead she feels overwhelmed in the museum but she is aware of the potential of what she is losing and although she rejects Brian she realises that she needs to tell her own story. Romantic love is therefore sacrificed in the path of self-discovery.

If Aboulela's encounter in the museum resonates with youthful anxiety and self-denial, Gabeba Baderoon's (2011) encounter in the South African National Gallery is its antithesis.



Figure 46: Tracy Rose, *The Kiss*. 2001.

The body is a landscape on which history is written.

In the South African National Gallery. I am drawn to Tracy Rose's *The Kiss*. Standing before it, I become a self who trembles with slow ecstasy at this work. I feel an elastic, mobile desire for the man and the woman in it, the intimacy of their blissful grasp, and the difference that the black and white photograph gives to his skin and hers... (Baderoon, 2011:75)

Baderoon is drawn to *The Kiss* (Figure 46) and is confronted with a visceral 'teasing, fluttering enigma.' She describes this mystery as an 'unsettling openness' and a new kind of recognition. She realises that the bodies are actually both different tones of black, so although the figures might appear to be a black man

embracing a white woman, they are not. Photography itself opens a new reality for her. It is not only the representation but the medium itself. What Baderoon is relishing is the *act* of 'looking'. The nude figures are in a sensual embrace and they hasten her to 'become a self who trembles in slow ecstasy' (Baderoon, 2011:75). However, the pleasure she feels is not merely scopophilic, where she derives sexual pleasure from looking at the couple while remaining unchanged. Instead she demonstrates the agency to 'bring her body' to the museum and to look. Baderoon realises that, the act of looking, especially for pleasure, is an act that has been invested with power in museums. At the South African National Gallery women of colour were not historically part of the museum's intended audience. Women lacked the agency to look and were either bodies rendered invisible by performing manual labour, or they were bodies to be displayed and looked at as cultural curiosities. Baderoon demonstrates that to look for the purpose of pleasure in a post-apartheid context is pleasurable in and of itself, however, it also acknowledges the autonomy one possesses as a free person. In conclusion to her visit, Baderoon asks 'what has my eye learnt?' In the post-apartheid context, where things are open to question Baderoon realises that her 'eye' is flexible, it teaches her seeing art can change her perspective. Her eye has also taught her that intimacy has intellectual weight. The closeness she shares with the couple has brought about a deeper understanding. Instead of drawing quick conclusions about race, her eye asks her to question her perceptions. It shows Baderoon that visual images can prove that identities are mobile and subtle.

Both pieces deal with black and minority women's experiences in the museum. They speak to different aspects of desire. Desire as fraught and tested and desire as realised and pliable. Both Baderoon and Aboulela's experiences translate a 'sensuous materiality' into words (Laura Marks, 2000). This means that their impressions have to do with expressing feeling through the senses. Aboulela's protagonist is frustrated because she realises the bravery she needs to reinvent herself. She also desperately intends to show her place in a modern Africa as a



modern African woman. Baderoon however, communicates a sense of looking at the photograph but also of touching: of ‘teasing’, ‘trembling’ and ‘grasping’. The image crosses many boundaries, it crosses the boundary of the picture frame, and becomes tactile. The nude couple cross the ‘race line’. Relationships between people of different races, which were forbidden under apartheid along with such a candid display of intimacy. Rose’s photograph rejects the representations of love in Rodin’s *Kiss* (1889) or Klimt’s *Kiss* (1908), which are either monumental and robust in its reverence, in the case of the former or highly ornate and devotional in the case of the latter. Rose’s kiss in contrast is irreverent, playful and ironic. The woman captured in the photograph is the artist. She shows spontaneous, uninhibited delight. She disregards the formalities of posing, ignores her dusty feet and positions herself, hips raised on her partner’s lap. Plinths such as these would have been reserved for important sculptures or busts of government ministers. That it now supports the arse of a black man seems like comic justice, but it also valorises the spontaneous side of love. As Brian says to Shadia in Aboulela’s story: ‘Museums change, I can change...’ (Aboulela, 1997:18), Rose’s photo, shot in the South African National Gallery certainly shows that museums were playing with the idea of change. In the following chapter I will show how the South African National Gallery worked to appear changed but had not changed on a deeper level at all.

Besides looking at change at the museum, Aboulela and Baderoon’s pieces lead me to thinking about the role that gender played in the formation of ideas at the South African National Gallery. As a conservative institution that only employed white male directors, it is striking that the first female director at the museum was hired by the state in the 1990’s. The unprecedented inclusion of art by black women in the African art collection is also worth noting. It is interesting that the traditional beadwork of black women was chosen to signal inclusivity at the museum. This will be investigated in the subsequent chapter.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Esmé Berman wrote the definitive encyclopaedic reference to South African art. Berman’s book references art that followed western norms and in this way art that did not conform to these

Both Aboulela's story and Rose's photograph evoke the zeitgeist of the 1990's in South Africa, where there was a palpable potential for change, when the world was hopeful and people were willing to look at each other in new ways. However, both writer and artist show the woman of colour to be the catalyst for change, within herself and within the museum. Rose challenges old racial perceptions, she looks as if she is a white woman sitting on a black man's lap. But Rose was classified coloured under apartheid. The context of the photograph assists Rose to show that racial terms are entirely superficial, superfluous and self-serving. Baderoon as the viewer, is empowered by her experience in the museum by claiming a sensual gaze and of entering the private intimacy of the couples embrace.

---

standards fell outside the referenced South African art canon. For example, Berman acknowledges that the story of South African art starts with rock painting but she notes that this is the realm of archaeologists and anthropologists not artists and art historians. Rock art is considered the topic of African studies not art history which is distinct, European and white. For Berman, western standards of art and its progress have universal application (Berman, 1983).



Figure 47: Berni Searle, *Looking back from the Colour Me series*. 1999.

### 5.12 Conclusion

If Audre Lorde's 'Litany for survival' (1978) is a poetic entreaty for black women to speak and be heard, to survive and to bear witness, to rise above fear, Searle's 'colour me series' makes that appeal confrontational. Searle shows, like Aboulela, Baderoon and Rose, that art can transform but that transformation occurs foremostly within and through the body and self of the black woman.

Used as part of a public art project 'Returning the gaze' curated by Zayd Minty and Carol-Ann Davids, this project aimed to make art usually reserved for art museums visible to people outside the art museum. Searle's image was printed on t-shirts which were worn by black women distributing postcards of artworks to members of the public (Returning the Gaze exhibition catalogue, 2000). The fact that it was so often reproduced added to its power and its wide distribution.

Rejecting the artwork as unique, the fact that these images were reproduced so frequently, turned it into an iconic symbol. A vehicle of change.

The story behind the video installation of these photographs is often repeated and has taken on the characteristics of folklore. In the photograph, Searle is covered in spice, the spice represents her heritage as well as referencing the trade routes to the east of which Cape Town was a part. Through spice Searle investigates the malleability of race as she is photographed covered in different spices in the series: turmeric (yellow), chilli (red) and dhanian (brown) powder. All these spices leave a stain on her skin, which allow Searle to be physically self-‘coloured’. In the image in Figure 47, the red chilli encrusts her face and covers her mouth, smothering her voice, referencing the historic silencing of black woman. But it is her eyes that are the most arresting. Her eyes say, my body is exposed but I have agency to arrest you with my gaze. I am a woman self-coloured, self-defined. Watch me watching you. Feel how it feels to be the object of the gaze. This image is mine and I choose to share it with you.

Claiming ownership of who I am, a woman of colour in a largely white art field, has been a long process. It has been difficult because a predetermined identity has always been ascribed to me. These identities intended to have me work for the good of others and intended to render me incapable of determining who I am for myself. It is only through my own voice that I can reclaim who I am and truly navigate a field that is still largely white. I have been on the outside often only adding a bit of colour or ‘spice’ to mostly white departments.

The time has come where I speak myself into being.

## Chapter Six

### *Rebranding the South African National Gallery: Appropriating Africa and the black body (1990-2000's)*



Figure 48: Isa Kabini, mural in front niche of The South African National Gallery, 1994.

## 6.1 Introduction: Redress and dressing the house of art

One of the central aims of this dissertation is to trace how art institutions in South Africa have responded to the demands of different political dispensations. My primary focus in this chapter is the South African National Gallery during the 1990s, a time at which all national institutions were required to reorient themselves away from apartheid and towards the democratic future of the ‘new’ South Africa.

I begin with the figure of Marilyn Martin, the director of the museum from 1990-2008 (Cook, 2009: 150). When I went through archival material on the South African National Gallery of the 1990’s I noticed a few striking things. The museum’s new director Marilyn Martin had a very visible presence across various media.<sup>91</sup> Her photograph appeared on many of her published pieces, serving to make her the new face of the museum. Martin, as the voice of the institution, spoke publicly and published prolifically, for both non-specialist audiences in the museum’s newsletter and also in academic journals and conference proceedings. At a time of political transition, she realized the power of language, in the museum’s newsletter, ‘Bonani’ (Behold! in Xhosa) she incorporated salutations from Xhosa which now superseded the English and the Afrikaans: ‘Uxolo Nokuthula’, ‘Peace and Goodwill’, ‘Vrede en Welwillendheid’ (Martin, 1996a:2). During public speaking engagements, she often spoke about ‘redress’ at the museum and her role in it.<sup>92</sup>

Since then I have read most of Martin’s published history. I know about the change in her ideas and how her thinking developed and adapted at the South African National Gallery over her tenure. I know how she spoke to those in power: government ministers, state presidents, leaders in industry, and leaders of the apartheid resistance. Perhaps Martin continued in her role as De Klerk’s

---

<sup>91</sup> Martin remained the director of the museum from 1990-2008 (Cook, 2009: 150).

<sup>92</sup> Redress, in the context of the South Africa National Gallery, is about righting the wrongs of the colonial/ apartheid past in collection and exhibition practices.



ambassador of art, as she did early in the eighties when she played a fundamental role organizing exhibitions and biennales in contravention of the cultural boycotts as seen in Chapter 4. I also know implicitly that I am not supposed to care about these things. I know that despite what Martin says in all her published essays and interviews, about inclusivity, multiculturalism and plurality, that she does not speak to someone like me. My experiences at the South African National Gallery over the years have taught me that the institution excluded people of colour even though it purported to be inclusive. My research experiences are informed by my personal impressions as well as archival research, and it is the conflict between what is published and the museum's public image that interests me.

## **6.2 Visiting the museum (1992)**

I loved the gentle rocking motion of the train, suburbs flashing by. The wind against my face, the thick matt, elephant-like skin of the plastic seats, messages scrawled on the grey walls, the extra wide windows I could push my body out through, the wind in my face. The freedom of being seventeen. Stepping from the platform into a subterranean world of neon lights on shop fronts and emerging from the escalator into the bright world above, moving towards the light. Emerging from an underground train-track burrow. Rushing at bodies through throngs on Cape Town station. The noise of moving people, talking, rustling shopping bags, buskers singing, traffic in the distance, the music of a saxophone echoing through the underground station. Emerging above ground, the fresh sea air and the too bright sunlight. Walking up Adderley Street, looking up, old buildings, beautiful wooden windows, doors, brass plates and turreted roofs. Colonial traces of little Britain. Speaking of an older time. Standing in between the glass and steel of younger, more uniform cousins. Into the Company Gardens and the avenue of oak trees, creating a canopy up above. Past the buildings of Parliament, speeding up past the white guards dressed up in pith helmets, rifles and razor sharp trouser pleats. Distracted by a homeless man talking to a



squirrel. Reaching our destination. Through the manicured garden, up wide sun warmed stone steps, through the imposing wooden doors. Into the silence of the South African National Gallery.

In 1992, my art teacher took the class to the national gallery, to see the *Recent Acquisitions* exhibition. It was a journey through the noise and bustle of the city into the cold, white calm of the museum. The contradiction was sharp. Cape Town was a city of contradictions, so was the museum. The museum stood both inside and outside the city, both inside and outside the noise, movement and chaos of the world outside. The contemporary South African art by young artists was extraordinary. Work by Andries Botha, Jane Alexander, Willie Bester, Penny Siopis, William Kentridge and Norman Catherine among others jolted me to new ways of looking and understanding and to new possibilities. It made me feel unsure, it was raw and transgressive. The presence of the exhibition mirrored the uncertainty of the country. Nelson Mandela was released in 1990 and we were still two years away from knowing what the future held. The message of the exhibition was that we had reason to hope for exhilarating if complex times. The rest of the museum was a glaring contradiction. Collections of pictures of horses, foxhunts, red coats and beagles occupied the inter-leading hall. Portraits of British aristocrats who were either plump and pink or powdered pure white. The contrast between these two collections was alarming. It was not just that the subject matter was different. It was that their messages rubbed up against each violently, staking their claim over the space in profoundly different ways. A collection of art that celebrated aristocratic leisure pursuits as well as their right to belong could not sit comfortably with a new collection that spoke of the quiet horror, absurdity and trauma of living in a police state. Surrounding the violence of the contradictory collections was the museum itself. Always silent, cold and hushed, floors and surfaces gleaming, people in lab coats disappearing behind closed doors and screens. The no-entry signs signalled the hidden world behind the scenes. Despite the forbidding atmosphere of the museum, the new collection drew me back again and again.

### 6.3 Visiting the museum (2016)

I drove to the South African National Gallery in December 2016 to interview the recently retired curator for African art, Carol Kauffman. I am more removed from the city than I was at seventeen, I am discouraged by crowds and my time is not my own. I don't have time to engage with my surroundings. I had always wanted to know what lay behind those doors at the museum so I was surprised and quite delighted to be taken down to the kitchen. I sat down, the only person of colour, while three white curators filed into the room. I was surprised but excited, to be surrounded by four curators, including Carol, because I had studied the museum for so long and now I was going to talk to all of them together.

I thought that if any place was the place for me in the National Gallery it would undoubtedly be the Victorian kitchen with the pea-green, oil-based paint and the black and white floor tiles and high ceilings. I kept thinking, 'if these old chairs could speak what stories they'd tell.' Absolutely, the kitchen is the place for me. It is the place of secrets and gossip and warmth and release from the stresses of the workday. An in-between place. Owned by no one and everyone, a place freed up. Instead, as my heart started racing, palms sweating, those pea-green walls began to resemble the kind of walls you find in post offices and police stations, sites that belong to the state. The kind of public spaces that make you want to move along, not sit awhile. I started feeling uncomfortable. I was cross-examined. Over tepid tea, stale mince pies: 'we're inviting you to tea!', they asked me at length about my research and supervisor and period of study, my previous degrees, majors, where I had worked previously, my funders and exactly where I lived. I couldn't understand why that lengthy interrogation took place. I know that the museum was being hounded at that time by reporters, over the Zwelethu Mthethwa case, and obviously felt under threat. Mthethwa, an artist and photographer was at the time standing trial for the murder of a sex worker, Nokuphila Kumalo. Mthethwa's work was on display in the museum in an

exhibition of representations of women. An advocacy group, Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT) had protested at the museum about the inclusion of Mthethwa's work in the exhibition and had demanded that it be removed. The panel of curators did not ask straight out if I was a journalist. Instead, I left feeling interrogated with an enduring belief that very little had changed at the institution. After at least forty minutes they quietly filed out as if by silent consensus that I was above board, and Kaufmann was safe with me. They left the site of my interrogation as if they had been enjoying a lunch break chat. I left, wondering not for the first time why I wanted to study an institution so obviously pitted against me. If that interview showed anything, it showed the boundaries that exist in the institution. Who is inside and who is outside. I am constantly reminded, as I was at university, if these are the people you are with when you are on the inside, who would want to be on the inside?

The interview I initially came for with Carol Kaufmann, went surprisingly well. After the brigade of curators left I learnt a lot about the national gallery. Kaufmann is a generous interviewee. It was never my intention to 'find them out' nor to write an exposé. I am not interested in sensationalism, although despite myself I have found the museum endlessly threaded through with sensation and controversy. What I am much more interested in are the mundane warps and wefts that hold the museum together and make it what it is. I am convinced that this is where the museum separates those who belong and those who don't.

What is mundanely normal is what the band of curators reminded me of that day. I do not belong in this field, doing this work. Despite that experience, perhaps because of the crazy interview with Kaufmann that followed, I was also reminded of the reason I have an affinity for the dastardly museum, riddled as it is with stumbling blocks and no entry signs. The museum reflects the larger insanity and inconsistencies of the country, but it is recorded with art. Through art is shown unique human insight into the insanity of the past. It gives us a view to this infuriating disaster of a country that at the same time we are so bound and

connected to. That is why I love it and I will continue to do so, regardless of all the gatekeepers poised to keep me out. In a field so very determined by images and surfaces I do not fit. It does not make sense to tell this story from above, in archives from tampered-with documents about people who have hidden histories, stories they do not want to share. I want to share the stories I have found but I do not want to relay tales of past glories. I will return to the cracks and in-between spaces and perhaps I will find my way back to the art museum, from the cracks in the kitchen.

#### **6.4 The 1990's political context**

By late 1989, political reform became an indispensable precondition for economic recovery. FW de Klerk replaced PW Botha as state President. According to historian Saul Dubow (2011) De Klerk had no intention of negotiating himself out of power and his actions did not represent a surrender on the part of the government. He hoped instead that by seizing political opportunities and introducing rapid reforms he might be able to outmanoeuvre his political opponents and retain the core of the existing apartheid system. He wanted to show that he was not negotiating under pressure (although he most assuredly was) but from the strength of his convictions. De Klerk gambled on a unique process, which stood the best possible chance at preserving the most important parts of white power and privilege (Dubow, 2014:265).

On 2 February 1990, De Klerk made his gamble and received immediate short term benefits. In his opening address to Parliament in February 1990, De Klerk unbanned the ANC, PAC and the South African Communist Party. In the following weeks, many political prisoners were released including Nelson Mandela (Worden, 1994:137). De Klerk meanwhile, committed the government to the negotiation of a new constitutional order. Some economic sanctions were lifted, sports boycotts were removed and international political acceptance was achieved (Worden, 1994:139).

Moderation and negotiation were the precondition of the new constitution, realizing the new South Africa was a fine balancing act that depended partly on Mandela's powers of persuasion but also on his image as consummate statesman as well as a prominent member of the struggle. It took four years for the process of transition to take place, which culminated in South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. However, it is important to note that this period of transition was the most turbulent period in the history of South Africa. According to Dubow, this had to do with the prevailing climate of political uncertainty and with the withdrawal of constraints that characterized forty years of authoritarian rule (Dubow, 2011:268). Regarding the elections of 1994 it is important to note that while there was a landslide victory for Mandela and the ANC, in the country as a whole the Western Cape was the only province which voted dramatically for De Klerk and the NP. In 1994, the majority of coloured voters voted for the NP and so reinstated the party responsible for apartheid in the province (Jacobs, 2001:23). This led to Mandela taking up the position of state president of South Africa, while De Klerk became deputy president.

Marilyn Martin was instated as the Director of the South African National Gallery a month after Mandela was released. Martin's tenure at the museum therefore dovetailed with transitional politics of South Africa. Transitional politics was characterized by negotiations between the white minority apartheid state and the black majority African National Congress (ANC). It was a time when the state moved towards democracy. It was also a time of intense negotiation, when the apartheid state showed that it would not let go of power lightly. The result was a negotiated settlement where white minority rights were maintained in the face of black majority rule. So, for example, white civil servants were allowed to stay in their jobs until retirement or in other cases received generous severance packages. The apartheid state required a vast and complex bureaucratic system and the people who facilitated this system were to remain employed. Inevitably,

this led to a group of whites that were recalcitrant and uncooperative in the changed political context.

By the late 1980's the politics of apartheid had become detrimental to the entire economy. Access to international markets and to new investment became increasingly curtailed due to economic sanctions. Technological advances in the country were making unskilled labour redundant. Most black people, and increasingly white people, were unemployed or unemployable. There was a spiral of ever worsening poverty as prices were rising and wages for the small percentage of the population who earned them were falling (Worden, 1995:137). Furthermore, South African debt in 1989 stood at 21 billion US dollars. Much of the state's debt came from military spending as well as arms procurement (Lodge, 2011:480). The apartheid states military spending contributed to producing the threat of attack rather than responding to it. The state consistently demonstrated an exaggerated use of force. It even developed biological weapons and chemical weapons, showing the apartheid state to be a paranoid state. They also used military spending for cross-border exploits and to suppress township resistance.

## **6.5 Rebranding the South African National Gallery**

Martin would emerge as a powerful player during the transition years of South Africa in the 1990's. Along with her team of white curators they would reconstruct the story of South African art at the South African National Gallery. Martin set this in motion through a self-directed process of rebranding. Rebranding would encompass revised political strategies, aligned to the transitional government and the project of redress and transformation. The stated aims of this project, attempted to right the wrongs of the past and adopt new policies and procedures to make for a more inclusive national gallery. The South African National Gallery's Draft Policy Manual (1991) and the policy document (1996) written by Martin set out for the first time a list of

‘transformation’ practices and was published for public consumption in an exhibition catalogue (Martin, 1997).

Marilyn Martin, the first female director of the South African National Gallery came into the museum from a high-profile position in the visual arts and had a reputation for her success in negotiations with the state and with industry.<sup>93</sup> Martin had been the president and vice-president of the South African Arts Association (SAAA) for at least five years before her instatement as director of the museum. The SAAA was the primary method of the apartheid government to engage with the visual arts. It was the official face of white art in the country. That meant that it was administered by whites and saw to the interests of white art. The association was designated as ‘own affairs’ during apartheid (South African Arts Calendar. 1983: 3).

Martin’s CV of 1987 is of an ambitious woman who learnt how to speak to power (South African Arts Calendar, 1987:3). Born in the rural town of McGregor in the Western Cape to poor Afrikaans parents, Martin matriculated in the town of Heidelberg. She did not go to a resident university but studied instead through UNISA, a correspondence university, showing the economic limitations of her home environment. The patriarchal apartheid context although curtailing the success of white women while promoting that of white men, ultimately allowed Martin to achieve success. This might have been because art was considered an acceptable arena for women while politics, for example, was not, although Martins role throughout her career was undoubtedly political. By the time Martin was President of the SAAA, she was a multi-linguist who could read and understand six European languages, three of which she could speak fluently. She did not speak any black African languages (South African Arts Calendar, 1987:3).

---

<sup>93</sup> Martin was also instrumental in securing funding for the SAAA from Afrikaans business with ties to the Afrikaner Broederbond, *Volkskas Bank*. *Volkskas* purchased a flat in the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris for the winner of an art competition held in collaboration with the SAAA. Winners would spend time working in Paris as a prize. The SAAA still administers the Paris flat (Martin, 1991: 11).



Despite her adoption of post-apartheid rhetoric Martin herself was the force that steered the South African National Gallery, to protect white hegemony during her tenure. She anticipated government policies and aligned the museum to new directives. Contrary to detractors, who believed that Martin was a state puppet, I believe that she intended to make a place for herself and for her team by employing new survival strategies for white cultural workers at the end of apartheid when their positions were under threat.<sup>94</sup> As a consequence, the South African National Gallery adopted a broader scope but remained entrenched in a white discourse of art and continued to be frequented by white audiences (Yoshiara, 2008). This meant that although cosmetic changes were made to the board of trustees, and black people were instated on boards, throughout her tenure power was concentrated in Martin and her team of curators.<sup>95</sup>

Martin worked on various selection panels for various regional exhibitions and also judged numerous local and international exhibitions, demonstrating that she knew the South African art world well and had a particular kind of power in it (South African Arts Calendar, 1987:3). Furthermore, she was also on the Board of Trustees at the South African National Gallery as a representative from the SAAA from 1987, three years before her official appointment as director.<sup>96</sup> She had established herself professionally in the academic arena at Wits University, so she was familiar with changing academic discourses, especially around New Museums theory originating from the United States and postcolonial theory originating from diasporic scholars. Her presence in the art field spanned both popular and specialist areas. For example, while she lectured at Wits in the department of architecture and opened various exhibitions, she also made regular television appearances. Martin published in both popular magazines and

---

<sup>94</sup> Martins detractors mainly came from a conservative white audience who felt that change at the museum showed that Martin was currying left-wing support (Cook, 2009:167-168).

<sup>95</sup> See note 12 in Martin Marilyn (2004), 'SANG: the horn of the national art museums dilemma post 1994 South Africa' (Martin, 2004).

<sup>96</sup> SANG annual Reports 1987/1988 and 1988/1989. In 1987 Martin gave a public lecture at SANG on South African art competitions.

scholarly publications. Most of her publications were in the Afrikaans press, although she also published in English. She was indiscriminate about the political stance of the publications and was an art critic for both *Die Vaderland*, an Afrikaner nationalist publication, as well as the *Weekly Mail*, a left leaning English newspaper, amongst others.<sup>97</sup> However, she only published in popular magazines with a middle class white readership such as *De Kat* and she was interviewed as a ‘*Skone Einstein*’ in the Afrikaans women’s magazine, *Rooi Rose*.<sup>98</sup> The way she is represented in these articles reveals that the popular Afrikaans press claimed her as a progressive Afrikaans woman.

During her time at the SAAA, Martin claimed flexibility across political lines and although she called herself a ‘liberal’, a large portion of her constituency was conservative.<sup>99</sup> She was proficient in various languages but it was her strength in both English and Afrikaans that made her competent in Cape Town’s white liberal art and academic scene. Her publications across academic and popular media also contributed to her strength. During her time at the museum her image was pervasive across the museums publications. Martin was the face of the South African National Gallery and later of the Iziko South African National Gallery.<sup>100</sup> Both photogenic and glamorous, the image Martin projected was one of wealth and sophistication.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> Popular publications included: *Die Transvaler*, *Beeld*, *Rapport* and *Living* where she wrote on painting, sculpture, photography, architecture and conservation.

<sup>98</sup> An article describing Martin as a ‘beautiful genius’ was published in the Afrikaans magazine *Rooi Rose*, for ‘stylish Afrikaans women’.

<sup>99</sup> This is especially true with regard to the SAAA’s ties with Broederbond businesses such as Volkskas Bank.

<sup>100</sup> The ‘Iziko’ designation is the most recent incarnation of the museum. It ties it to other state run museums in the province. Iziko is a Xhosa word that means a hearth and a place of congregation.

<sup>101</sup> This extended to diplomatic undertakings such as meeting foreign members of state. Martin could speak English, Afrikaans and French and understand Spanish, German and Dutch. The fact that she did not speak one of South Africa’s other nine official languages shows perhaps that she considered the field of art grounded in Europe.

## 6.6 Marilyn Martin's strategies

The period preceding her instatement at the South African National Gallery in 1990 shaped her time there. I will start by looking at this time. Thereafter I will trace a few of her strategies to show how they fit into a process of rebranding. However, it is useful for my argument to show how well-established Martin was with the apartheid government and to show how she and the museum benefitted from these connections later.

In 1989, preceding her appointment at the South African National Gallery, Martin had a close association with FW de Klerk who was Minister of National Education in the apartheid government.<sup>102</sup> De Klerk would later become state president and would win a Nobel Peace Prize along with Nelson Mandela in 1994 for his work in the negotiation process. According to Jan Heunis, a senior civil servant in PW's Botha's president office, De Klerk was part of a hard line conservative inner circle that along with Louis le Grange and Magnus Malan advised PW Botha (Lodge, 2011:478). It is significant that De Klerk finally capitulated to the SAAA's demands for significant funding increases during Martin's directorship (Martin, 1988:3).

Recalling her negotiations on behalf of the SAAA concerning funding with FW de Klerk as Martin notes,

...the lack of adequate funding which the South African Association of Arts (SAAA) has experienced for so long, as well as the source of funding to which we have been subjected in recent years were discussed at length at our AGM meeting in Potchefstroom. It was clear that we had run out of patience and endurance, and there was unanimity that we should seriously review and reconsider our ties with the Government. Mr. De Klerk had asked to see me and at our meeting on October 19 we negotiated a new and better deal for the Association (Martin, 1988:3).

In the above passage, Martin demonstrates that since the SAAA has been in financial difficulties for some time they were considering severing government ties. However, after her negotiations with De Klerk the problem had been solved.

---

<sup>102</sup> FW de Klerk was the Minister of National Education from 1984-1989.

A better deal had been negotiated and it is assumed that the SAAA could function with government involvement once more.

It is important to note that besides negotiating issues around the visual arts with the state, Martins role with the SAAA included performing diplomatic tasks as part of the state. At the behest of the state and in contravention of the cultural boycott as described in Chapter Five, Martin was closely involved with four exhibitions of South African art that went to West Germany, Italy, Monte Carlo and Chile.<sup>103</sup> Subsequently, she was enthusiastic in her support for these 'international' ventures and published her ideas widely (Martin, 1985; Martin, 1986). Her writing from this period shows her not only to be strident and unrepentant about contravening the cultural boycott but also to be clearly attuned to the diplomatic role of art. She had experience in how art was used by nations as a diplomatic tool. For example, art could be used to counteract a negative image portrayed in the media, as seen in the example of the Valparaíso Biennale.<sup>104</sup> Martin wrote of Chile and South Africa's relationship sharing a commonality based on exclusion,

The two countries have much in common, including arum lilies, prickly pears, viticulture and political banishment... in both countries the artistic umbilical cord with Europe and North America has been cut. (Martin, 1986:55)

Art could also be used as a form of damage control. However, it could also be used as a way for pariah states to band together in the face of international condemnation. Martin went into the national gallery aware of these things. I believe that they helped her re-imagine a space that was once cut off from the world through cultural boycotts but which, in the aftermath of apartheid, occupied a central place on the world's stage.

---

<sup>103</sup> See: Chapter Five

<sup>104</sup> See: Chapter Four for a discussion of the Valparaíso Biennial of 1985.

Establishing the 'Foundation of Arts' De Klerk directed significant funds to a foundation, which had as its broad aim the 'promoting of creative arts'. It was not under the control of the state and was not instituted as an Act of Parliament. While the foundation would be funded by the state for two years it would be able to apply to commercial enterprises in subsequent years. The foundation was therefore established through state money but would not be held accountable to the state or to any other party for its expenditure. This new channel of money was an enormous concession to make on the part of De Klerk. A substantial amount of money, R4 million, was to be paid by the state over two years. This is especially striking since it occurred at a time when the country was in severe economic distress (Lodge, 2011:480).

### **6.7 The Foundation of Arts (1989)**

The Foundation of Arts was established by FW De Klerk in close consultation with Marilyn Martin. During the first year (1989) of its establishment, 1,9 million rand was paid into the trust. A further amount of 2 million was promised the following year in 1990 (De Klerk, 1989: 5). The way this money was used is unclear but I believe that it was directed to the National Gallery when Marilyn Martin was instated there as director.

In 1989, the year of FW de Klerk's munificent gift to the arts in South Africa, the largest items in the governments projected expenditure was for the military and education (Lodge, 2011:480). Coming directly from the Minister of Education, part of the money in the education budget was undoubtedly set aside for the new arts foundation. What is questionable is why De Klerk decided to finally concede to the SAAA's demands after negotiations of eight years, especially since he had his sights set on higher political stakes. Six months after establishing the new arts foundation, in August 1989 De Klerk was the state President of South Africa replacing PW Botha. Almost simultaneously, Martin was appointed as director of the South African National Gallery by the National Department for Education

possibly under the directive of De Klerk. What was the Foundation of Arts? What role did it play in securing Martin's role in the white art world?

In articles on facing pages of the SAAA the Arts Calendar (1989:3-4), complementary pieces by Marilyn Martin and De Klerk announce the establishment of a new foundation of arts. Martin's article is in Afrikaans while De Klerk's article is a copy of a speech he delivered to the SAAA in English. De Klerk's speech includes the following statements:

Our country needs its artists and their creative powers and energies perhaps more than we realize. A self-renewing society cannot grow without the upheaval, doubt, scepticism, questions, fears, vision and enthusiasm of deeply committed spirits. We must have questions posed by our own people, in our own country, and the voice of prophecy cannot be ignored. We badly need the sharp eye of the critical thinker, the scalpel of the writer, the sensitivity and passion of the painter... the honesty of the true creative spirit is indispensable to the life of the nation. (De Klerk, 1989:4)

De Klerk's piece mentions the duty of the state to support its artists, but he reiterates the importance of establishing a foundation of the arts as a self-governing body. He calls this independence 'the bonus of real and tangible independence from government control.' (De Klerk, 1989: 4) While much of the speech is political rhetoric such as, 'the creative arts is on the threshold of a new dispensation' (De Klerk, 1989:4), De Klerk spends most of his speech on the unique character of the artist and their role in society. Painters are 'sensitive and passionate spirits', poets are 'wistful and rebellious' and critical thinkers are 'sharp'. The country needs these spirits in order to self-renew because a society cannot grow without upheaval and doubt. While these voices might be disturbing, these unique spirits have the ability to 'gaze' into the future. They are therefore indispensable to the life of a nation. 'We must have questions posed by our own people, in our own country and the voice of prophecy cannot be ignored.' In the dying days of apartheid De Klerk had to work hard to convince a cash strapped government that spending money on art was of any use at all. It

also goes without saying that ‘our own people’ are white people. In the apartheid context speaking to the white audience of SAAA in Potchefstroom, De Klerk’s words ‘our own people’ referred to white people only. Likewise, when De Klerk claims that the state has a role to play in the ‘creation of a positive climate and the maintenance of sound morals and security’ he refers to white artists (De Klerk, 1989: 4)

Martin’s article in contrast is clear and to the point. Her audience was different and she is reporting back to her constituency but she also shows herself to be a consummate politician. It was redundant for her to discuss the stereotypes of artists to fellow artists and administrators. Most importantly, Martin enumerates what she has gained for the SAAA, stating that the hard work over the last eight years has resulted in clear quantifiable gain. Although she does make a telling if cheeky comment on the involvement of the state in the arts:

One thing is clear and habours no argument. The state is not entitled to control activities, which are so closely tied to an individual’s unique talents, gifts, values and emotion... As far as I am concerned, there is a clear dividing line. The management of the arts is a matter where the state should keep his hands at home.<sup>105</sup> (Martin, 1989:3)

In other words, the state should not control the creative activities of people they do not understand. There should be a limit to involvement. Indeed, according to Martin, the state had better keep his hands to himself. This is ironic given the censorship of the apartheid regime and the way black artists, writers and musicians were crushed or forced into exile. While white artists were also living with the terrible effects of apartheid they did not face the same extreme forms of censorship.

---

<sup>105</sup> ‘Oor een ding hoef daar nie ’n argument te wees nie. Die staat is nie daarop ingestel om ’n aktiwiteit wat so nou aan die individu se unieke talente, gawes, waardes en emosies gebind is, te beheer nie. Die Staat kan nie en moet ook nie die kreatiewe talent van die skeppinskrag van mense met besondere gawes rig en stuur nie. Wat my betref, is daar ’n duidelike skeidslyn. Die bedryf van die kunste is ’n saak waar die Staat sy hande moet tuishou.’ (Martin, 1989:3)



Using sexual innuendo in this context Martin regards the state as male and as sexually aggressive. The image she invokes is of a man's hand (the state) indulging in an illicit affair away from the marriage domicile and creeping up the demurely crossed legs of an attractive woman (Art). This statement points to a white woman's role in the white male dominated political world of the time. Martin was sending out a message that contrary to opinion she was not averse to naming and shaming the owners of those hands if things did not pan out. She therefore explains her success by making De Klerk appear vulnerable, she does this by evoking old fashioned notions of propriety. In this way, Martin shows herself to be a hardy committed political ally or opponent depending on the strength of promises made.

## **6.8 Quantifiable gains**

What were the gains Martin made from her close association to apartheid politicians? I have found three such benefits from the available literature. Firstly, Martin had time, secondly, she had a lack of state interference, and thirdly she gained expanded acquisitions for the South African National Gallery. All these things worked in her favour and helped her to be successful.

Martin was instated as director around the time Nelson Mandela was released which allowed her to position herself outwardly at least as aligned with a changing political reality. Additionally, she had four years, after the release of Mandela, to establish herself and the new direction of the museum. So, while detractors such as Ingrid de Kok (1996) writes of the hasty change at the museum, the truth was that Martin actually had a lot of time to effect superficial changes that preserved the structure beneath. Perhaps what De Kok questions is the way Martin effected change. Not only did things appear to be rapidly changed but there was a slickness in her rhetoric that was understandably political, given her ties to the apartheid state. Politicians can easily and without conscience

change their tune given a changing context. I am reminded here of the way the National Party and De Klerk exploited the coloured vote in the democratic election of 1994 (Jacobs, 2001).

## 6.9 Lack of interference

Martin (2008) speaks of the lack of state involvement in the arts during the start of her tenure. This gave the museum more independence from outside interference, it is also the reason why the museum could operate more or less independently.

The institution was autonomous. It's always been a kind of parastatal. The word parastatal really didn't exist in the old South Africa, but it's always been a very long arm of funding and we've kept it that way. My predecessor ensured that it was that. In terms of bureaucracy, I managed the institution obviously with financial people and so on, and subject to the state auditor, but we managed our budget and we kept the bureaucracy down. With the amalgamation in 2001 when Iziko came into being and the centralization of functions - centralization brings bureaucracy - and it has just grown to a point where most of us find it untenable, so *now* we're battling bureaucracy. (Martin in Cook, 2009: 150)

Our previous government - any government in South Africa from the time this institution came into being - hasn't really been interested in the visual arts and museums. That counts against us, and it also counts for us, because we've had no interference. The curators would make the selection of art works. We then started involving Board members who knew about the visual arts in the selection. We had a good built in system at that time. (Martin in Cook, 2009: 150)

In the above quote, Martin says they had no interference from the state. It was precisely because, as I have shown, the museum was part of the state, so the state did not need to rein the museum in. There was therefore no, 'us' and 'them' as Martin makes out. They were one entity and the museum was not outside of the apartheid state. Of equal importance is the issue of funding. At the start of Martin's tenure, the museum had a budget of R250 000, which diminished over the years. It is also important to note that the Department of National Education,

De Klerk's old department continued to support the museum because it fell under that department's jurisdiction (Martin in Cook, 2009: 158). Furthermore, in 1991 the Department National of Education purchased an extensive collection of Ndebele beadwork for the museum. The Department bought the collection for R200 000 which was 80% of the Museum's entire acquisition budget. Referred to as the 'African heritage collection' Carol Kaufmann (2005) described, approximately 2000 new acquisitions that entered the permanent collection between 1990 and 1993 (Kaufmann, 2005:15).<sup>106</sup>

### **6.10 Rapid and expanded acquisitions (1990-1993)**

The period preceding the democratic election of 1994, under Marilyn Martin, saw the largest acquisitions in the history of the museum.<sup>107</sup> The 1989/1990 period at the South African National Gallery shows the number of works acquired as 37 while the period 1990/91 shows 173 works. The increase in acquisitions from the 1990/91 period is therefore profound.<sup>108</sup> Two types of acquisitions were made over this time. There was a notable and dramatic increase of contemporary South African art (Williamson, 1989). These works went on to be described as 'resistance art' by Sue Williamson, among others. Williamson (1989) was one of the first critics to connect the 'Recent Acquisitions' collection from the South African National Gallery with resistance to apartheid. She writes about many of these works in connection with protest art, posters, t-shirts and graffiti. Although wide-ranging and exciting, I argue that these works were too easily grouped together. While many of these artworks were exceptional they were based on parameters set in a white art world. If they shared a commonality it is showing the differences between white and black art and how lesser known black artists had

---

<sup>106</sup> Carol Kaufmann was appointed Curator of African Art in 1992. Her designation at the museum was the only one that referred to a region and ethnographic designation. All other curators have designations which refer to the medium in which they have expertise. (Kaufmann, C. 2005).

<sup>107</sup> This is based on Annual reports which list acquisitions for the year under discussion. The largest group of acquired works was African art work. In sharp contrast to other work acquired the artist is never mentioned but instead the ethnicity of the artist. Undoubtedly this was the influence of natural history museums which treated these kinds of work as ethnographic 'artefacts'. These works formed part of the 'African art heritage' collection.

<sup>108</sup> SANG annual reports 1989/1990, 1990/1991, 1991/1992

to overcome a hostile art world to be acknowledged and be successful. There is a clear disparity between urban art school trained black artists and rural artist. It is striking how Williamson often ‘speaks’ for rural black artists, and talks about their art on their behalf, while white artists have their own voices and speak for themselves (Williamson, 1989:40-41). Works by the following artists from *Recent Acquisitions* are: Jane Alexander, Kevin Brand, Norman Catherine, Helen Sibidi, William Kentridge, Andries Botha, Beezy Bailey and Sue Williamson herself. Many of these artists’ works became definitive works at the South African National Gallery and help position the museum in a different way. I am not going to concentrate on these works in this dissertation and instead choose to concentrate on the way the ethnographic was seen as a presence of Africa at the museum. *Recent Acquisition’s* speaks more to global connections, and to re-writing a canon of South African art. It was also consistent with ideas of rebranding the museum, as many of these works became institutional icons. I am especially interested in the flood of Mfengu and Ndbele beadwork, baskets and textiles that were collected at this time.

Something that has never been acknowledged by Martin is the role apartheid funding played in making possible the acquisitions at the time. It is important to acknowledge that apartheid money made these new collections possible because this speaks to potent undercurrents of these collections. It is easy to assume that the works were collected under the pretexts of ‘redress’, which is probably partly true. In a changing political context, Martin herself and her friends who continued to have a hand in the institution, however remote, intended for her to be successful.<sup>109</sup> These collections physically demonstrate the dying vestiges and enduring legacy of apartheid at the museum. If Jane Alexander’s cadaverous *Butcher Boys* (1985), which was acquired during this period, refers to anything, it

---

<sup>109</sup> According to the Annual Report 1994/1995 South African paintings were loaned to the state Presidents office and paintings from the permanent collection of South African art ‘decorated the offices of Deputy President De Klerk’ furthermore, 54 paintings decorated the manor houses of Anglo-American Vergelegen, ‘...in anticipation for the visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth’ (Annual Report 1994/95: 13)

refers not only to the torturous soul of the apartheid past, it refers to the enduring soul of apartheid in the brightly lit 'redressed' national gallery.

What did this mean for the process of rebranding? Rebranding could conceal the fissures of real struggle, inequality and conflict at the South African National Gallery as it sought to portray the museum as changed while depending on apartheid support and gifts. I do not question that state museums are dependent on state funds, regardless of the governments in power but employing an aggressive rebranding project to reflect an already changed institution smacks of dishonesty and contradiction.

It is worth noting that the museum was part of a larger process of the rebranding of the South African 'rainbow nation'. Branding South Africa, meant a combination of all the natural things of living in freedom combined with the country opening its heart to rampant capitalism and neo-liberal policies. The effects of the apartheid past and these policies have caused continued inequity and growing anger amongst various people.

### **6.11 Rebranding**

Martin adapted her rhetoric throughout her tenure at the museum. She came from a position heavily entrenched in politics but she was also clearly weary of the state's involvement in art. However, she also realised that her new position as director involved the state. She dealt with this in two ways. Firstly, she adopted the bureaucracy established by the apartheid state and maintained these organizational structures. In this way, she was able to surround herself with sympathetic white curators. Secondly, she directed the process of rebranding, clearly laying out her terms of engagement. These terms followed a strategy developed by Martin and supported by the advertising company McCann-Erickson.

The mission statement of the South African National Gallery published in the exhibition catalogue *Contemporary South African Art (1985-1995)* from the South African National Galleries permanent collections is as follows:

The mission of the SANG is governed by its function as a museum concerned with the visual arts. Activities include collecting, curatorship (documentation and conservation) and communication through exhibition, education, research and publication. The goal of the SANG is to develop and maintain the highest standard of excellence in all its activities and to be an art museum of the first rank. The SANG acknowledges the multi-cultural nature of South African society: we strive to accommodate diversity while recognizing and supporting the building of a national culture. We pursue a goal of non-discrimination with regard to race, class, creed, gender and sexual orientation. We are committed to equality of treatment and opportunity.

I believe that the South African National Gallery is a good example that shows how whiteness was reconstituted cosmetically in a volatile political environment. However, as the kitchen scene at the South African National Gallery twenty years after the end of apartheid shows, surfaces might have changed but realities have not followed suit. What was responsible for this urgent need to forget the past when the past was not yet gone and when apartheid officials were still embedded in government institutions? What was responsible for the double speak? Was it understanding that old structures were falling apart and was there a need to back the winning 'democratic' team?

Marilyn Martin and her team made new policies, which aimed to include a broader audience, include more African art, and 'redress' past imbalances in the collection. Abundant collections of African art (formerly relegated to ethnographic museums) entered the museum, acquisitions records overflow with beadwork, textiles and basketwork. Contemporary South African art, which

would later be named ‘resistance art’ also entered the collection at this time. The director spoke and wrote about her strategies for change widely and all these words are inclusionary words. Her work is replete with terms such as: ‘representative’, ‘inclusivity’, ‘rewriting’, ‘Eurocentric’, ‘redress’. On the surface, it appears as if things were going in the right direction.

### 6.12 Contradiction and redress

I do not find a contradiction between policy and practice at the South African National Gallery. What the museum publically *said* and what it *did* appeared consistent on paper. What I am more concerned about is the shape shifting of the institution.

Since 1990 every function of the institution has been reassessed and tested against the needs and requirements of a changing South Africa. We have moved away from the idea of the museum only as a repository of objects to one, which places the emphasis on social and educational responsibilities. We no longer cater for a privileged elite and we respond to and work directly with the different constituencies, which comprise our communities. One of the major tasks has been to establish a collection, which acknowledges and celebrates the visual culture of southern Africa... (Martin, 1996b:4)

What made Martin feel confident enough to call on the liberation struggle as a means for nurturing a new collective South African identity? What made her so secure that she could call on transparency and openness when her history was riddled with subterfuge and secrecy? I think that this was precisely because after six years as the director of the museum, and three on the Board of Trustees she knew how much control she had and she also knew how to stay in a secure position.

So much of the old South Africa remains in place and in power, and a continued culture of secrecy and corruption is a real threat to the well being and growth of the fledgling democracy. Transparency, openness and accountability are concepts foreign to many politicians and those in control of capital...It is incumbent upon civil society to guard and



defend the principles of democracy enshrined in the interim constitution... the political awareness and the ability to challenge and monitor authority, which were developed and honed in the struggle for liberation, will stand us in good stead. (Martin, 1996: 15)

Furthermore, ironically when Martin (1996) speaks of the structures of apartheid she also refers to the museum. The very things she is especially secretive about are the benefits the museum gained under the apartheid state.

Similarly, for Martin inclusivity meant rejecting European ideas of fine art:

The beadwork, the baskets, the textiles, the headdresses... have exactly the same status as the paintings and the sculptures. I'm not interested in the so-called 'fine-art' categories because they are not our categories. They are European categories and we shifted from all that to be inclusive. (Martin in Goodnow, Lohman and Bredekamp, 2006:171)

### **6.13 Changing the image of the museum**

In 2012, as a senior member of the Education Department at the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha Qatar I was involved in a program aimed at rebranding the museum. 'Global' brand managers, Wolff Olin's, were contracted to 'rebrand' the museum.<sup>110</sup> As a commercially minded, corporate identity design team this translated to mean designing a 'better business'. The Wolff Olins' team worked primarily with businesses and they treated the museum as another kind of business. Their brief was to make a museum associated with the religion of Islam, (because of its name) the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, 'friendlier' and to make it more appealing to a broader audience.<sup>111</sup> The first strategy Wolff Olins employed was to change the museums name, using the acronym MIA instead. The thinking was that it would make people think of a girl with a pretty name instead of a

---

<sup>110</sup> Wolff Olins has recently rebranded the 'Met' in New York, somewhat controversially. They have branded the 'New Museum' in New York as well as 'Tate Modern' in London. See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/19/arts/the-met-and-a-new-logo.html>

museum that was overtly 'Islamic'. The idea is that rebranding is concept driven focused on a particular outcome. It is also seen as a survival strategy. I intend to show that by using an advertising company the South African National Gallery was very consciously working on a different image.

Wolff Olins were not especially concerned with a local Qatari audience, who the Qatari museum Director thought were still too backward, and needed education at school level to make them understand the importance of art. They were focused on a diverse audience with a focus on western expatriate audiences. Qatar was at that time trying to brand the country more generally. As the world's wealthiest economy, it wanted to stake a claim for itself on the world stage. Art and museums were a part of this strategy. Building eight 'world class' museums, were part of a colossal project that included the news channel Al Jazeera, a five-star airline, the Asian Games, a World Cup bid which was beset by controversy, a 'knowledge village' project called Qatar Foundation, where various American and British satellite universities operated from. All this meant was that the Muslim majority country intended to put Qatar on the map. However, since many of the practices in the country were unpalatable to the west, for example, female veiling, not being democratic and Sharia law, making the country palatable meant that the state also needed to make the country desirable. The state intended to do this by projecting western styled branded sophistication, and it used its museums and exhibitions as well of a host of other projects to achieve this. The museum of Islamic Art with the most established, six-year-old collection was the crown jewel. In this way, the country aimed at projecting Arab style hospitality instead of the hostility toward the west.<sup>112</sup> The country 'courted' western style brands from London, New York, Paris and Milan. However, through the entire process of branding the country there was a desire to maintain Qatari patriarchal culture.

---

<sup>112</sup> This has badly backfired, with its neighbors, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt blockading Qatar. The blockade attempts to cut Qatar off from the rest of the world: the land border has been sealed, Qatari overflights banned and shipping lanes closed. The bloc accuses Qatar of supporting terrorism, an accusation Qatar denies. See: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/05/qatar-diplomatic-crisis-what-you-need-to-know>

The easiest way to illustrate this is through the Dolce and Gabbana 2016 abaya range. The abaya is the black outer garment worn by Gulf Arab women. Traditionally it was employed to shield the wearer from the harsh sun as well as to preserve their modesty, today it is a cultural symbol of wealth, and even decadence. For some young women however, especially those educated in the west it is becoming an increasing hindrance and an oppressive tool of men. The western brands accompanying the abaya, (bags, shoes and perfume) similarly speak of the wearer's wealth and social standing (see Figure 49).



Figure 49: *Dolce and Gabbana Spring Collection abaya range 2016.*

What has the tiny wealthy state of Qatar in the 2010's, which is roughly the size of Port Elizabeth, have in common with South Africa? What has the futuristic Museum of Islamic Art, Doha have in common with the modest history-burdened South African National Gallery, separated as they are by time, economy and geographic distance? The trend to brand museums speak of a broader trend in the museum world. That is the museum as business. In this case both countries wanted to rid themselves of the past and signal change. Qatar wanted to move away from the ethnographic image of the unsophisticated desert dwelling Arab Bedouin. South Africa wanted to distance itself from an ugly apartheid past. Both cases show an urgency to be forward looking. Concomitantly, there was an urgency to be part of the world. Martin had contravened cultural boycotts during apartheid to be part of the world. Ultimately both museums wanted to project key messages about themselves to global audiences. The Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, maintained its key messages with an imported workforce and male employees were 'orientated' in their dealings with Qatari women. They were told: never to look a woman in the eyes, or ask after her family, for example. While the South African National Gallery maintained its white workforce only adding a (white) curator of African Art (Carol Kauffman).

#### **6.14 Rebranding, shape-shifting**

What follows is based on my experiences of rebranding which I found fitting for the South African National Gallery in the 1990's. I intend to show that rebranding is a strategy that has specific outcomes but that because it is based on a business model it works to make museums have the same superficial surfaces of corporations. Surfaces that shift and change depending on market demand. It is not meant to be enduring and so is a product of fashion, it is about image. In a couple of years, a 'rebranded' museum needs a 'refresh' or a new look, aligned with other corporations, businesses and products.

A brand is a consistent idea, usually accompanied by a catchphrase that is followed through the institution. This means that its messages and intentions are constructed. In a successful brand, all these things are consistent appeals to certain ideas. For example, a motif on an African basket is repeated on the logo. This logo is repeated on marketing collateral (entrance tickets, exhibition catalogues, pamphlets etc.). Visitors come to associate the museum with the images they see across these different platforms. Today it would extend to various Internet based platforms too which includes a web presence.

Specific things influenced the process of rebranding at the South African National Gallery. The political context of the time was critical in shaping the museum. This made it an imperative to change the image of the museum with great urgency. Much like Qatar rebranded the country, so too did South Africa. In Qatar, the image they sought referenced the young population, wealth and a new cosmopolitan identity. In South Africa, the new democracy and a changing government was central to the new Rainbow Nation. Along with the idea of the Rainbow nation were associated symbols and representation. A new rhetoric was spun and it used words such as 'unity in diversity' and 'inclusivity'.

The personality of the new director, Marilyn Martin, with her connections to the apartheid state, also shaped the museum profoundly during transition years. The process of rebranding exposes a superficial process since the audience demographic was still largely white (Yoshiara, 2007). The director following Martin, Riason Naidoo also speaks frankly of the enduring racial tension at the museum. This shows that rebranding as a tool for museums is fundamentally flawed. Museums are not businesses and a wide cross section of the public does not respond to them in that way. A generic scheme cannot be imposed across museums and have audiences respond in a standard way. However, if you are not interested in creating diverse audiences, and perhaps want to limit the potential for a diverse range of people to enter the museum, turning the museum into a venue for elite fashion shows and events is the right way to go about it. The

museum in Doha wanted to create an elite venue in a city whose largest demographic is under thirty, they did not want to encourage a wide range of people into their halls, which would have included Indian labourers, or the multitude of other people responsible for building the glass towers and futuristic domes. The management of the museum in Doha had no problem keeping certain people out, but the South African National Gallery made it part of their new remit to include everyone. How had directions changed so dramatically at the museum? The changed political context and the presence of the new director steered the South African National Gallery on an altered course.

In 1996, Martin writes about the role the South African National Gallery plays in nation building and she ties this with the paraphernalia of democracy:

The concepts of nationhood, of one nation-ness and of a national culture are integral to the new South Africa. A new constitution is being instituted, a new flag is everywhere- on buildings, vehicles, lapels, ties, key rings and clothing, it is painted on faces and exploited for advertising everything from film to motor cars... the power of the arts and culture in forging national identity and national consciousness and the role which artists, institutions and civil society can play are debated at length and in different forums. (Martin, 1996a: 3)

However, I would also like to draw attention to the NP's victory in the Western Cape and suggest that although the museum had ties with the state and the ANC more generally, that is with a generalized 'rainbow nation', Martin for all her rhetoric was not interested in real change. Instead rebranding the museum fitted Martin's strategies.

### **6.15 Redecorating the museum**

One of the rebranding strategies was harnessing a generic idea of the rural black woman and her work. This was made possible due to the extraordinary acquisitions that had come into the museum in the early 1990's. The black

woman's work signalled both a 'safe' and desired presence of Africa at the colonial museum. This followed an idea of Africa as domestic and familiar as well as ethnographic and frozen in time. At a time of political uncertainty, the rural black woman and her work were palatable to an art museum with a conservative white constituency because it presented a removed black subject. This rural subject's work could be conveniently appropriated into the imported canon of South African art at the museum. However, along with the representation of the black woman at the museum it is also important to note the presence of the white woman at the museum. That is the white director, her team of white curators and their role in cultural production. It is important to note how they framed the museum and attempted to keep a conservative support base happy while introducing new policies and practice.

The idea of black woman's work could be seen in major exhibitions and acquisitions of 'African art', which included beadwork, textiles, basketry and even murals (see Figure 51). African art of this kind entered the museum at this time in great numbers. These works were usually reserved for the collections of the South African Museum of natural history but by collapsing the art/craft dichotomy the museum claimed these as art works (Martin, 1993). Understandably, this black woman's work lacked the traditional frameworks of western art. This included the absence of known producers as well as a lack of known provenance. Renaming this work 'art' in light of the changing political context was seen as politically expedient and was criticized (Minkley et al. 2017).

In the art museum, this decontextualized woman's work was to be used as a subject of aesthetic appreciation and study. Taken out of their rural context black women 'worked' for the museum in various ways. Women worked for the museum through the process of 'rebranding' where it conveyed key changed messages visibly on the museum walls, but black women also had a more ambiguous function of helping white female curators identify with a desired notion of Africa and of making them secure in an African identity in an uncertain



job market and in volatile political environment. In the sections that follow I shed light on the place of black women within the white fine art world and how this relationship was inherently unequal and biased. The definitions of art used were the same as before but couched in different rhetoric. I also show how black women and their work was a convenient subject for the South African National Gallery to use in their rebranding project. Two exhibitions demonstrate how the museum used black women's work in this way.

Redress intended to show that that the South African National Gallery was moving into an imagined new multicultural dispensation. *Ezakwantu: beadwork from the Eastern Cape (1993)* and *IGugu LamaNdebele: Pride of the Ndebele (1994)* are two such exhibitions that demonstrate that the black woman was part of the academic exercise at the South African National Gallery. This art was associated with womanly practices, was aesthetically pleasing and situated in the ethnographic past. That means that it represented the black woman as safe and docile associated with homemaking, and not protesting for example. Choosing to acquire this work at this time shows how elements of African society were appropriated that fit with the museums larger rebranding project.

**6.16 Two exhibitions: Ezakwantu: beadwork from the Eastern Cape (1993)  
and IGugu LamaNdebele: Pride of the Ndebele (1994)**

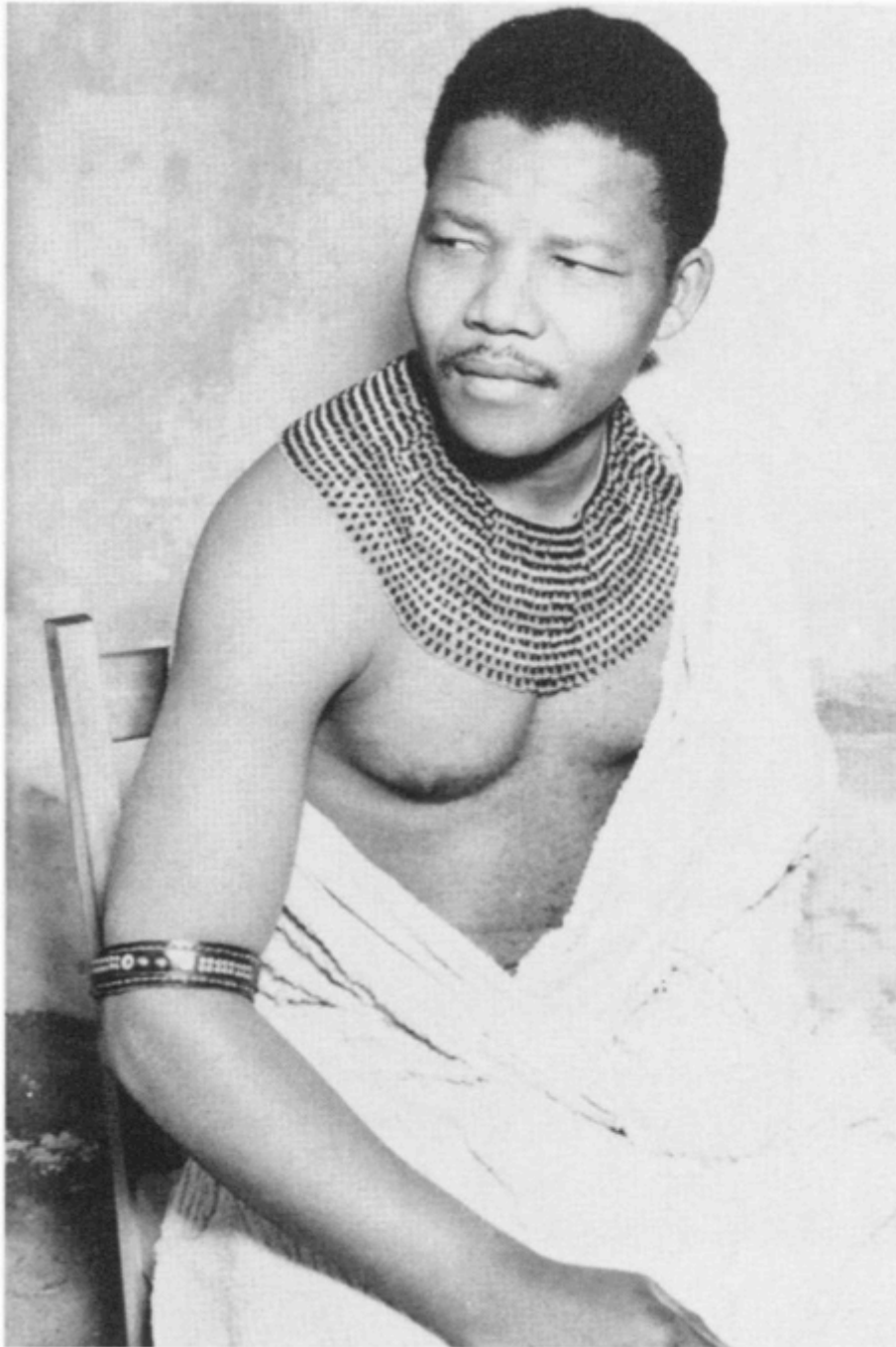


Figure 50: *Portrait of Nelson Mandela wearing beadwork*, from Ezakwantu: beadwork from the Eastern Cape (1993), exhibition catalogue.

The exhibition *Ezakwantu: beadwork from the Eastern Cape (1993)* displayed beaded objects and garments from the former Ciskei and Transkei on the eve of the first democratic elections. In Marilyn Martin's foreword in the exhibition catalogue she writes that the exhibition was intended to be the 'most radical art accomplishment of the twentieth century'. This was mostly because the exhibition re-contextualized beadwork as art, and also intended to encourage,

...an understanding, among all South Africans, of those parts of our history which have been neglected, which remain unrecorded or unacknowledged, or which have been suppressed (Martin, 1993:6)

*Ezakwantu* could be read as the museums most politically expedient exhibition attempt. In various ways, it directly addresses the black majority and the ANC political party. Since beadwork is associated with black woman's work, Albertina Sisulu, ANC Women's League head, was a guest speaker at the opening. A portrait of a young Nelson Mandela, in traditional dress was printed in the exhibition catalogue (Martin, 1993). The photo of Mandela references the Treason Trial of 1956, where Mandela used traditional dress as act of defiance against the prevailing political system as well as reinforcing his royal status. Two black bead-artists were also part of the exhibition demonstrating their skills and materials.

Critic Nessa Leibhammer (1995) reviewed the exhibition, and suggested that certain aspects made the exhibition especially ethnographic and attempted to locate black people in the past. Since no translator was present when she visited the exhibition, the Xhosa speaking artist, Nosayisi Nzilala could not talk to visitors. Since dialogue was impossible, the woman was objectified much as any other object displayed in the glass cases. Curated by Emma Bedford and Carol Kaufmann, the exhibition floor plan looks similar to a cultural history display (Bedford, 1993:5). Read from the left to right, there is a clear route through the exhibition which demonstrates that the curators intended to guide visitors along a clear narrative route. The early uses of beads, could be translated as the 'discovery' of beads by western academics, the various places beads came from

and the contemporary uses of beads. Themes were divided along themes, such as 'cultural', 'political', 'historical' and 'contextual'. The exhibition started with colonial paintings and illustrations and moved to an interactive map showing the various bead trade routes. All of the above were conventions of cultural history museums, not art museums. However, read together with the accompanying catalogue and opening events the exhibition shows itself to be a product of its time.



Figure 51: *Ezakwantu*: beadwork from the Eastern Cape (1993), glass display cases.

According to Leibhammer, the method of display hampered showing the aesthetic and visual quality of the pieces. Placing the beaded objects in glass cases ‘created the impression that these are specimens rather than artworks and heightened the impression of ‘othering’ the culture on display’ (Leibhammer, 1995:81). Figure 51, shows that the display resembled the display from the South African Museum, a natural history museum. The objects on display do not look as if they are part of a living culture, but were instead presented as fossilized

artefacts. Liebhammer also comments negatively on a continuously running video, of dancing and singing Xhosa men wearing beadwork, which further reinforced a statistic cultural vision.



Figure 52: Nameless 'Invited Artists' at the opening of the exhibition *IGugu lamawdebele* (Pride of the Ndebele) 1996.

The sun faded Ndebele painting in the niche of the South African National Gallery (Figure 48) is intended to bear testimony to the presence of Africa at the museum. Two such paintings were painted at the end of 1994, following the first South African democratic election. It was meant to be a clear sign of inclusion at the museum and show that the house of art was 'redressed'. Martin's vision for the South African National Gallery, was to show that objects known as craft were art objects and that they had a place in an art museum. The exhibition *IGugu LamaNdebele: Pride of the Ndebele* (1994) followed *Ezakwantu* and once again brought traditional black art into the museum but this time with a changed repertoire of display. Martin states (1996b) the museum responded to the 'challenge' of unrelenting criticism from academics with *Ezakwantu* by

approaching *IGugu LamaNdebele: Pride of the Ndebele* (1994) differently. Almost the entire museum was taken up with the enterprise and received a

Ndebele facelift – external facades, internal murals, and murals used to construct courtyard walls... screens were painted and placed in strategic positions throughout. (Van Vuuren, 2001:90)

Chris van Vuuren (2001) calls the exhibition of 1994 the Ndebele *Tour de Force* at the South African National Gallery. He is critical of the way the Ndebele was represented at the museum and writes that the museum perpetuated the distorted myth of the Ndebele. This myth is realized in popular tourist culture on post cards and in coffee table books. For Van Vuuren, not only did the museum engage in patronizing tokenism, given the political context, but it used the Ndebele women themselves as art objects. This was the Ndebele women wearing ceremonial dress, with beaded aprons, bright shawls and robust brass rings around their necks (Figure 52).

The museum's Annual Reports 1994/1995 makes special mention of the way the Ndebele women were treated, something I had not come across with reference to artists in previous reports. A patronizing tone is used, echoing that of a generous white benefactor.

Ndebele muralists and sculptors worked with gallery staff and guest curator, Peter Rich on the exhibition. The women were accommodated, entertained and transported during their stay. All their other personal requests were addressed. Ms. Kaufmann secured a visit to Parliament where the women were introduced to President Mandela.

According to Van Vuuren (2001) Ndebele women entered the discourse of art as tourist objects. This aligned comfortably with the western aesthetic idea of selective appropriation. This means negating to tell the stories that fit uncomfortably with the story of choice. For example, the exhibition discounted the traumatic history of a people who were forcibly removed, whose leaders were



imprisoned, who had their homes turned into a tourist village, and who were not recognized as a 'tribe' until the apartheid government finally found land, which was historically alien to them (Van Vuuren, 2001: 91).

Martin speaks of the Ndebele women who came as part of the exhibition as manual labourers:

Peter Rich, who was a colleague of mine at Wits architecture department, designed the architecture and built it and the women came and they painted. They worked so fast we didn't know what to do with them. They were going to be here at the opening, so they painted panels, and then the niches had been a problem, because we had little sculptures in them... and I suddenly thought 'why don't we get Isa Kabini to paint them? (Martin in Cook, 2009: 182)

Martin's statement that 'they worked so fast we didn't know what do with them' shows that Martin did not treat them as equals and felt that she had to delegate work to them. Artists do not need to be told what to do. In another instance, in an essay on the South African National Gallery's new projects and its role in building the 'rainbow nation' Martin reflects on the Ndebele project once again:

Initially overlooked by the apartheid regime, the Ndebele were moved off the farms in the 1970s and were required to reside in the KwaNdebele homeland, which related little, if at all, to their geographical and historical context. Ritual and symbol provided the source of strength for adapting to the new dislocation and deprivation. (Martin, 1996b:8)

Illustrating this quote is a photograph (Figure 52) of the opening of the Ndebele exhibition. Martin makes no mention of this event, nor of the identities of the women photographed. The photograph can be read as the group of ethnic women performing some kind of ritual in the museum. This instance shows how Martin related to the black women she inserted into the museum environment. Much as other art objects, they could be brought in and then sent away when their work was done.

### 6.17 Carol Kaufmann interview (2016)

Carol Kaufmann was appointed as curator of African Art in 1992, in the quote below she explains an exhibition of Venda art and stone masonry at the South African National Gallery. I chose to include it here to show the museum's position with regard to their black subjects. With the best intentions, there is a lack of insight and a failure of understanding of her position of power in relation to the people of whom she speaks. More importantly it shows how African traditions are appropriated into the world of the white curator and interpreted through her own vision of the world.

We brought some of the king's stonemasons and we reconstructed some of the stonewalls here (at the museum). Some of the masons, inherited this incredible knowledge of the great walls of Zimbabwe. And they reconstructed the most beautiful installation, Anglo American sponsored it, and we brought down these gold artefacts and ceramics and bone bits and pieces. Later on, it went in the museum. And we had the most spectacular opening, and Jack Lowman was there, and he said it was one of the most memorable events of his sojourn in South Africa. We only expected the king, who was a member of parliament and fourteen people to come with him. But over 200 people that arrived from Venda on buses, women barefoot, carrying baskets on their head came to witness the opening of the exhibition, and the king's army arrived and they did the Tshikona dance. Each man has a reed with a different note, and they make a big circle and they dance for five days in the gallery, outside. And then after the opening, we had to find accommodation for all the people! Fortunately Max Steele gave me a lot of money, Anglo American. And we put them up in the train, some people slept in the annex and I was presented with a Mwenda, the royal outfit, that the royal aunts, that the Makahani clan of Thulamela, they claimed descent from the royal ancestors at Thulamela, and that they made for me and they brought it for me in a basket and they presented to me in front of everybody. They dressed me, I had to lie on the floor in front of the king, Irene was with me, but they didn't make her, because I don't think she was in Venda with me, she was the co-curator but she wasn't there in the early arrangement. Although she met us in Pretoria, yes! And they gave me a title, they gave me a name, Njikandra! The person, the plough who open the soil for the Venda people. Just so astonishing, and the interesting thing is that one of the Makahani family, are very concerned with Thulamela, because they claim descent. They, these people, have the most astonishing knowledge; which has been passed

down by generations about working with gold, mining gold and refining of gold. They know where, still in the Kruger National Park, where there's gold, where treasures hidden. (Kauffman, 2016)

I was mystified and perturbed when Carol Kaufmann spoke of her experiences with her informants in the above quote. I could not fault that she was truly excited, genuinely involved in the experiences she spoke of. But it was as if I had stepped back into some colonial 'tribal' past. In this mythical past, traditions remain unchanged and are secret and protected. In this place only a few trusted white people are charged with the 'honor' of being shown the treasures of ancient cultures. The ancient ways, the gold and the secrets. I would like to draw attention to the way the natives draw the white curator into their world, of authenticity and royalty. Note no black person has a name or is known, beyond being an 'aunt' of a 'royal'. Kauffmann is named and is rebirthed Njikandra, the one that ploughs the earth. The event of dressing the curator in tribal clothes of renaming her and of making her lay at the feet of the chief inverts the curatorial process. It does not only make the natives grateful it claims the curator as a member of the tribe and makes her black. It gives the white curator, rebirthed as black a new kind of agency. It gives the white curator the agency to speak as a native.

## 6.18 A new logo



Figure 53: *The South African National Gallery's Logo c.1990 for the Bonani newsletter.*

The new logo introduced in 1990 was a simple sign that the museum was cosmetically Africanized. According to Martin (1996a) a curator and the advertising company McCann-Erickson conceptualized the museum's logo (Figure 53). Lino cut became popular amongst black artists in the 1980's because it was a cheap medium that could be easily reproduced. During Martin's tenure at the museum this image was reproduced on signs, on tickets, on posters and book marks. Referring to the new logo, Martin notes that

Readers of 'Bonani' have probably wondered what the 'eyes' in the previous issue signified. They are from works in the SANG permanent collection and are to be found on a wonderful new poster which entices the public to visit the art museum. For some months now, Nicolaas Vergunst and I, with input from staff members, have been working with McCann-Erickson on the poster and new brochure, which will be published in 1996. McCann-Erickson has generously taken the SANG on as their client - without financial reward! Such is our reputation that a major international advertising company wishes to be associated with our work and our mission. (Martin, 1996a: no pagination)



Figure 54: The South African National Gallery with Logo c.1990.

I searched online to find out a bit more about the advertising company McCann-Erickson. The following quote from Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* greets visitors as they enter the offices of the advertising agency:

I'm not interested in stories about the past or any crap of that kind because the woods are burning, you understand? There's a big blaze going on all around. (Arthur Miller: 1978)

Although it is unlikely that the quote was there when Martin worked with McCann-Erickson, I think that this sentiment captures the 1990's at the South African National Gallery quite well. Martin was focused on the blaze of the apartheid state and her old friends falling all around. For Martin, there was an urgency to create an alternative 'styling' at the museum. I use the word 'styling' consciously, instead of a changed 'narrative'. Narrative implies a story, while styling is more consistent with advertising. Styling implies conceiving of an image or brand. In this way, Martin included the work of black women, real black women, rhetoric, as well as logo's and signs.

### 6.19 The same storytellers spinning new tales

Art historian Okwui Enwezor, has an interesting perspective on the construction of national identity in the 'new' South Africa of the 1990's. Enwezor writes:

However optimistic one may sound in articulating the new South Africa, we must constantly remind ourselves that while nations may disappear, the ideologies that feed and sustain them, and which form the foundational basis of their creation, are more difficult to eradicate. For these are imaginatively reconstituted through the use of the surplus resources of their enduring myths as banners to rally adherents. (Enwezor, 1999: 377)

Enwezor speaks of the legacy of the past that informs the present. What I am interested in is a shift and change so radical that institutions such as the South African National Gallery appear Janus faced. Enwezor writes of the scripted new identity of the new South Africa. This means that not only was this identity planned and premeditated but that it was projected by the same agencies as before. The same storytellers were spinning new tales. The relationship between the master and subject had not changed because the storytellers had not changed. Referring again to the New South Africa, Enwezor notes that

what one encounters within this scripted and representational presence is a nation seeking a new identity, and thus new images, new geographies, boundaries with which to ballast its strategic and mythological unity as what has become known as the 'Rainbow Nation'...to put it bluntly such a search is clearly related to how whiteness and its privileges are presently conceived...to examine the charged descriptive detail of what strikes at the moral heart of the 'new South Africa'... is to keen ones ears to the new uses and vindication of whiteness. (Enwezor, 1999: 378)

According to Enwezor examining the moral heart of the 'New South Africa' in the 1990's is to look at new assertions of whiteness. These new manifestations are presented obliquely in barely recognizable forms. These forms of whiteness are barely recognizable because they have changed from previous forms but also

because they are disguised. Reconfigured whiteness is for Enwezor at the center of the new South African national identity. In this way whiteness is renewed and remains authoritative. I believe that reconstituting whiteness at this time was possible through the appropriation of Africa and the black body at the museum.

While looking for voices that have been excluded at the museum, the 1990's show the museum as a contradictory place. On the one hand, there appear to be large-scale visible changes at the South African National Gallery, but on the other it seems as if very little has changed. The audience demographic did not change at all (Yoshiara, 2007).

Yuuki Yoshiara (2007) ran an extensive audience demographic survey at the South African National Gallery as part of her PhD. Her intention was to see if anything had shifted in the years from apartheid to democratic rule. She also wanted to look more broadly at the significance of art museums for people in a diverse society. Yoshiara's findings show that:

South Africa's museums, which were deeply rooted in the notion of Western modernity, have been attempting to strip themselves of the bias toward Western culture and attempted a fundamental change of direction in order to serve all people and to celebrate the diversity of cultures... the positive evidence of the transformation is apparent in the change of representation including acquisition policies and displays in individual museums. Looking at the user's profile of the National Gallery of the country, however, we realize that the majority of visitors are still dominated by Whites and, moreover, that the number of local visitors is ironically going down since the gallery tried to appeal more to the whole population. (Yoshiara, 2007:42)

Yoshiara's findings show that audiences remained largely white at the South African National Gallery. I would like to contend that this was due in part to the way the museum managed the transitional period. Change at this time allowed the museum to change policy, acquisitions and exhibitions but these did not



affect the traditions long entrenched at the museum. This was further reinforced by decision making and staffing.

Contrary to Martin's rhetoric, the museum failed to create an open space regardless of race, gender or class. As I have argued in this chapter, the museum inadvertently entrenched many old colonial and apartheid stereotypes at this time, under the guise of change and transformation. Change at this time was superficial and was ultimately based on white employees keeping their jobs and of using government contacts in the apartheid government. Furthermore, in a context of global museum strategies, I believe that the museum harnessed methods used by overseas museums and embarked on an image of change. This image required an alignment of the functions of the museum. This meant that, museum policy, acquisitions, exhibitions and rhetoric operated in harmony. In this way, Africa was appropriated to change the image of the museum. The function of rebranding was used to position the museum in a new way. Ingrid De Kok wrote in 1998 that the South African National Gallery was opportunistic in its hasty rewriting of collection and other practices. De Kok suggests that:

This gluing together may be the key function of art and culture in a time of social change, but it involves seeing and feeling the mutilated shards, before the white scar can be celebrated. (1996:62)

The South African National Gallery did not want to confront the mutilated shards of the apartheid past too closely. This was because in reality it was not in the past. Instead it attempted to gloss over the horror and took public steps toward change. It is quite terrifying that an institution steeped in a colonial and apartheid past could in any way be responsible for the healing of the 'white scar' of a collective South African identity. But Martin made bold claims as to the museum's position in South Africa:

We believe that we are doing more than passively holding up a mirror to society, that we inform, construct, change and direct the narrative –

aesthetically, culturally, historically, politically – through our acquisitions and exhibitions, that we invigorate art practice and that the national art museum is integral to refiguring and reinventing South African art and identity. (Martin, 1997:18)

In the 1990's the rapid activity of rebranding allowed the museum to appear changed. Although 'rebranding' museums is a term borrowed from marketing and is a more recent phenomenon in international museums, I believe that the term fits the museum for various reasons I have demonstrated. Ultimately, the institution remained unchanged.

Talking about confronting the legacy of apartheid at the museum, Riason Naidoo, director (2009-2014) of the South African National Gallery speaks of the atmosphere of suspicion and animosity at the museum:

I was thrown in to the lion's den. It was an all white curatorial team, five permanent curatorial staff, all white, some had been there eighteen years, some had been there thirty years already. There was also an assistant curator, one, also white. So entire curatorial staff was white. That was kind of reserved for white people, of course, the director position was also reserved for white, until my appointment. I think it was made more difficult by the fact that one of the staff members had applied for the job and I think felt entitled to the job, and on my appoint it made things at the gallery very difficult, very tense. I think before I even got there, there was a lot of sentiment against me. So, there was a lot of stuff to deal with, you know, on taking up my appointment. (Interview Riason Naidoo, December 2016)

Perhaps there was sentiment against Naidoo personally but there was also sentiment against him in the abstract – against blackness, against change, against transformation. It is telling that, by the time Naidoo started at the museum in 2009, the museum was still riddled with racial tension. Naidoo's experience does not only speak of white curators not letting go of power lightly but of the enduring patronage networks that operate in spaces of white culture. It is important to note that racism alone was not the only factor that kept people out

of the museum, classism was another factor that made it inhospitable to black South Africans.



Figure 55: Stacy Stent, *A Dissertation on art in three languages*, animations stills, 2000.

Artists were critical of Martin's rebranding, believing it to be superficial and politically motivated. In 1992, for a Triennial competition, white artist Beezy Bailey attempted to expose the museum's use of political window dressing by inventing an alias, a black woman artist named Joyce Ntombi. Ntombi's work was bought by the South African National Gallery while Bailey's work was not. By exposing the museum's new 'appreciation' of the linocut medium, Bailey intended to show the 'reverse racism' of the museum (Beezy Bailey website, 1998). Bailey attempted to show the museum's use of political window dressing. Following the incident at the museum Bailey continued to produce work under the name of Joyce Ntombi. This shows how easily the agency of the black woman as artist can be appropriated.

Artist Stacey Stent (2000) believed that her animations helped to be critical of the situation where ‘members of the old guard still hold powerful positions in the country’ (Stent, 2000: 35) Stent’s animation of Marilyn Martin (Figure 55) is at once critical of Martin but it is also humorous because it shows how Martin battled to include black languages in her speeches. Stent portrays Martin as a puppet of the old ‘Nat’ apartheid government, wearing a ‘Nat Gal’ badge she says words that split her face in two, perhaps showing the contradiction between what she says and what she feels and revealing her to be literally ‘two-faced’. The words ‘kunjani’, ‘middag’ and ‘hello’ are salutations, which represents the easy way Martin shifts between the different parts of the museum’s image. Stent also pokes fun at the way Martin can seamlessly move between different political discourses while keeping a straight face.

*The luggage is still labelled: blackness in South African art* (2003) directed by American academic Julie McGee and education officer at the South African National Gallery Vuyile Voyiya, caused a fuss amongst conservative sectors when it was first shown at the South African Association of Art Historians conference, Stellenbosch University.<sup>113</sup> Following the screening, the film and follow-up papers were dismissed as racist and ill-informed by a few vocal participants. The film focused on the experiences of black artists and questioned how being black informed their work and their profession in South Africa. Over about twenty interviews, black artists were asked about educational opportunities, professional opportunities, art institutions, and the role of art history and criticism.<sup>114</sup> In conclusion, McGee indicates that according to the black artists they interviewed suggested that little had changed for them professionally as artists following the demise of apartheid. Artists expressed continued marginalization and frustration.

---

<sup>113</sup> In the film the term ‘black’ was employed broadly to describe any artist who was historically disadvantaged under apartheid.

<sup>114</sup> Included artists interviewed were Peter Clarke, David Koloane, Berni Searle, Lallitha Jawahirilal, Thembinkosi Goniwe, Gavin Younge, Lundi Mduba and Mandla Vanyaza. Marilyn Martin was also interviewed as well as critics Gavin Younge and Lloyd Pollak.

Following an Art Association of Art historians conference in 2003, the head of art history at Wits University, Nettleton responded to black artist's comments on the film, *The luggage is still labelled: blackness in South African art* (2003), screened at the conference:

[Thembinkosi] Goniwe's claim that we (the Art Historians) should be ashamed because there were no black females in our gathering has set the cat amongst the pigeons. I would like to ask - What university department has a large number of black female students studying Art History? I have had one who has gone through to MA level and she didn't finish her MA because she got pregnant and decided not to continue with her research report. There is no art taught at the vast majority of South African schools so we have a very small pool from which to draw. Art is anyway, in most parents' minds, a foolish luxury and studying it leads nowhere. Those of us who have made it as Art Historians have studied our proverbials off and have ended up in positions of authority in Universities, and not merely because our skins are white and our gender female (this in response to Pro Sobopha's assertion that white females controlled the art world). What stuck in the gullet of critical viewers of the video and listeners to the papers presented by Goniwe, Sobopha and Voyile at the Art Historians' conference in September were the wild claims and the lack of intellectual rigour (it was claimed, amongst other gross distortions, by the white art critic in the video that whites were indigenous to South Africa). The fact that Goniwe claimed, on top of all this, to be speaking for 'the Black woman' - essentialised no doubt - put the cherry on a cake which I suppose we were expected to swallow in the spirit of wallowing in our sense of white guilt. This was not going to happen. Yes, we need to draw more persons of colour into a discipline that is essentially Western, in a context which is not. But, to start laying out a lot of inaccurate accusations and to do one's accusatory work without the necessary research is pointless. Show us that you can do the Art Historical research properly and you will be taken seriously. (Nettleton, 2003:no pagination)<sup>15</sup>

Nettleton's statement is important to include in this chapter because it exposes the discrepancies inherent in the art field in South Africa. It also shows a pattern I have seen in the literature, and in practice (at the South African National

---

<sup>15</sup> Nettleton, as the then head of art history at Wits and is quoted from the website ArtThrob that focuses on contemporary art. She is referring to the conference at Stellenbosch University of the South African Association of Art Historians.

Gallery, at art school and at university) in the white South African art world. This is with regard to the inclusion of black women in the field of power. Throughout this debate, inherent in the discourse and without ever saying it, white art historians are asking: 'Where is *our* place?', 'Who cares about what *we* have to say?' The debate is inadvertently about the white art historian and their place in the field. Perhaps that is the problem, that they struggle to include themselves with the multiplicity of voices that are all contributing to broadening a narrow field.

I have referred to Nettleton's work throughout this thesis, and I recognize her as a respected, well-published member of the field. I use this quote precisely to show that although Nettleton can write about black women's work and colonialism in abstract, can take up the cause of 're-writing' art history in a post-colonial context. The above quote shows that she has little idea of a black woman's academic life. According to Nettleton (2003) black women do not have the necessary fortitude and tenacity for studying art history and to illustrate her argument she uses the example of her black student, who instead of studying her 'proverbials' off like white women, dropped her 'proverbials', and had to deregister.

Amongst white women in academia there is an enduring mythology of sacrifice and of ascetic self-denial, of forgoing desire and family for an academic career. From Nettleton's description, these are the women who achieve 'academic rigor' and who go furthest. While white women open their minds to higher learning, black women open their legs as lovers and mothers. I find this insulting because it suggests that black women were never meant to be in academia, never meant to use our minds. I know this to be untrue. Some of the best scholars, both black and white, are all things combined. Mothers, scholars, lovers, friends and artists. People like Nettleton do not only define the field and scholarship within it, they want to define what the scholar should be. The scholar should be like them. Until the scholar is like them, they should not think to enter into debate with them,

‘show us that you can do the Art Historical research properly and you will be taken seriously.’ (Nettleton, 2003)

Admittedly, art history has never had the numbers of students other areas of the humanities has had, and yet white women have always been groomed to take up positions in art history departments. This is why they have always risen to the top. Hard work alone does not make this possible. White privilege as well as the power of white networks needs to be recognized and acknowledged by white academics. This also has to do with coming to terms with the inequalities wedged tightly in our art institutions. White academics need to come to terms with the necessity of sharing already scarce resources and of admitting dissident voices. Surely that is part of what scholarship is, surely it is the creation of knowledges?

Discussing the same film *The luggage is still labelled: blackness in South African art* (2003), Marilyn Martin states in 2004, while referring to the film maker, Vuyile Vuyiya:

...Vuyiya used institutional time and support to create a devastating and one-sided document, with an American Julie McGee, on institutions in Cape Town. What was the most disturbing amongst the omissions, inaccurate statements and bias were the criticisms emanating from the former board members and members from the SANG acquisition committee, Lionel Davis and David Koloane. Davis, Koloane and Vuyiya served on this committee from 1996 to 1999 when the new structures were implemented...the elision of facts to suit certain agenda's and the refusal to acknowledge change serve neither the artists nor the institution. (Martin, 2004:11)

I can only imagine that what Martin refers to when she says the film is devastating to the museum that she means that it failed to acknowledge her contribution to the landscape of South African art. According to Martin the museum affected grand large scale change, but black and white South African artists do not always agree with her. Black audiences did not make it into the institution. That former board members spoke publicly about the institution is



not especially incriminating. The agendas she speaks of are however ambiguous. What agendas could black artists have? Martin also does not deal with the issue raised by artist Pro Sobopha that white females control the art world. I agree that it would not do to lump all the white women who are in positions of power in the art world together, that will undermine the differences between them. Perhaps it is telling however, that Martin chooses to ignore a statement so obviously referring to her.

Black artists meanwhile have continued to feel excluded at the South African National Gallery. Artist and academic Nomusa Makhubu (2013) notes that the racial division in the South African art world accounts for an 'ephemeral democracy'. Makhubu speaks of a deep-seated ambivalence among white stakeholders concerning the suitability of black cultural workers in the visual arts industry. Referring to the reception of an exhibition at the South African National Gallery curated by Riason Naidoo and which I discuss in the concluding chapter of this dissertation, Makhubu shows how black cultural workers are persistently undermined when their work does not fit certain white standards. Citing artist Sharlene Khan, Makhubu expresses a growing dissatisfaction of white domination in the visual arts industry, and she shows that there is an enduring exclusion of black cultural workers and intellectuals (Makhubu, 2013).

## **6.20 Conclusion**

In 1999, The South African National Gallery along with fourteen Cape Town museums were incorporated into Iziko, which was the new administrative structure. The museum had to apply for state funding that had to be aligned with certain objectives. This included purchasing works and creating exhibitions that were directly aligned with state objectives. Funding was granted subject to fulfilling these criteria, which included: purchasing work from previously disadvantaged artists, referencing national priorities such as: the empowerment of women, HIV/AIDS and youth issues. Following the period of political

transition in the early 1990's the objectives that the museum had to fulfil changed. I have shown in this chapter that there is a vast divide between guidelines prescribed by state departments, however well intentioned, and the journey they take toward being realized. By the time projects are realized in the national gallery, they have already travelled a long way.

As can be seen in the two exhibitions *Ezakwantu*: beadwork from the Eastern Cape (1993) and *IGugu LamaNdebele*: Pride of the Ndebele (1994), the museum had a questionable relationship to community participation. Over the 1990's Martin often reflected on 'community participation' in projects at the museum. In 1996, at the Fault Lines conference, once again speaking about redress, Martin shows how the museum balances its white curatorial voice with black community involvement. Martin fails to realize how a curatorial voice supersedes 'community' voices because the relationship is not one of equals. Museum staff and curators are the true conduits of how these experiences are displayed. Additionally, there is a conflict between the academic and or curatorial authority and that of the community informant. The academic/ curator occupies an almost sacred position for Martin. Referring to the controversial exhibition by Pippa Skotnes, *Miscast: Negotiating Khoisan history and material culture*, Martin states

Curatorship becomes the creative act, the material becomes the prime vehicles for reading and revealing, interpreting and celebrating. Spaces and objects are pierced by the imagination to release and raise the voices of the past. Skotnes confirms – in the most compelling and powerful way – that knowledge resides in the visual exploration of things, and that culture is a site for human sharing and understanding. (Martin, 1996b: 5)

I agree that curatorship is a powerful creative act, it is generative and original at its best. At its worst curatorship is parasitic. It sits on the backs of subjects as an academic exercise, or it weaves a web that colludes with political directives. Curatorship at the national gallery has never been a pure creative act. What might appear academically sound, might literally and figuratively step on the real

lives of 'community informants'. In Skotnes' exhibition, the display was hurtful for visitors of Khoisan heritage because they saw the evidence of their ancestors' humiliation and abuse by authorities. Can a curator really recreate these things without inflicting the violence once again in the present? I do not think that a clever idea ever supersedes the humanity we should show to our fellow human beings. Our place in the story we are weaving is exposed by the ways we choose to tell these traumatic tales.

Meaningful projects originating in communities across Cape Town, bore testimony to the gaps that exist between intention and execution, what people want to achieve and the end result. Kylie Thomas (2014) writes of one such project in 2002-2003 that involved women living with HIV/AIDS and The Memory Box Project, an art and narrative therapy project (Thomas, 2014). The results of this project, memory boxes and portraits, were exhibited at the South African National Gallery. The project was widely exhibited and sponsored, and for all intents and purposes was highly successful. Thomas, however questions the hyper visibility of representations when that means they are made to fit with prevailing ideas at various institutions and their dominant voices. What are the things that fall off the side when curators and museum directors are applauding its success? Is it another 'relevant', 'redress-style', 'black woman' project that fits the bill for greater visibility for the institution? Unquestionably, the South African National Gallery shows how institutional forces and hidden narratives work to present all artworks as reproductions of the academic/curator in the museum context. The things that are lost are the things that fall outside. The true humanity that does not fit the narrative, lived realities that are overlooked and the shards that lay exposed. Sadly, the art museum context exposes how academic ideas, constructed, tight and shiny, are often more important than the parts of humanity that do not fit.

What of Marilyn Martin and her grand project to recreate the South African nation through art? Martin brought exciting art and collections into the museum

and her time brought a new vitality to the museum. She worked extremely hard. It is galling however, that her most substantial collections were bought with apartheid money. That she could do this while speaking about a post-apartheid present is repellent. The fact that the collections of black women's art arrived out of no-where, as 'gifts' from the apartheid state makes me highly suspicious. Knowing the brutality of the apartheid state, I assume that these art pieces are the remnants of unscrupulous exchanges as best, and war booty as worst. The fact that Martin brought black women into the museum, in the two exhibitions is also questionable. This is the final point I want to make. Authority never moved from Martin and her white curators. This is the reason the black woman never moved beyond a subject suspended in time. That was consistent with apartheid ideology. Try as Martin might this ideology never left the museum, regardless of the rebranding efforts and vast new collections and post-colonial rainbow nation rhetoric. It remained a space apart.

## Concluding Chapter

### *Curating difference at the South African National Gallery and student activism in Cape Town (2010-2016)*



Figure 56: *Pierneef to Gugulective (1910-2010)*. 2010.

#### 7.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter I focus on the large-scale art exhibition held in 2010 curated by Riason Naidoo, who at the time was the newly appointed director of the South African National Gallery. The exhibition brought the divisions at the institution and in the art world that I have discussed in this dissertation to the fore.

Two photographs evocatively document the recent past in the South African art world. Figure 56 shows the interior of the South African National Gallery. It documents the first black director, Riason Naidoo's mega exhibition that encompassed the entire museum. As the photograph shows, his exhibition included some well-known South African contemporary works. From the right, a self-portrait by William Kentridge, the enormous reclining sculpture by Andries Botha and portraits on the wall to the left by Diane Victor. Mary Sibande's sculpture is in the far-off distance through the doorway. Sibande's piece,

‘Conversations with Madam CJ Walker’ (2009) barely visible in the background, represents a black domestic worker and is a visual echo of photographs of black workers discussed earlier in the thesis. Figure 56 shows that the field of South African art is rich, exciting and crowded but that art by black artists is still sparsely represented. Artists such as Kentridge and Victor and many more entered the art world, both local and international, as well as the South African National Gallery through apartheid endorsed means. What does this post-apartheid exhibition say about the inclusion of artists who became known for art that resisted state oppression while taking part in art competitions and exhibitions that supported the state? It shows that art and its meaning can change in a museum context depending on various factors. The artists themselves speak through their art and subject matter but the people who have the power to speak through art exhibitions (curators and directors) also have powerful voices. It shows that even ‘resistance art’ made at the cusp of democracy but bought with apartheid moneys make up a significant part of the collection and needs to be dealt with in the present. Perhaps most importantly for the sake of my argument this exhibition shows how the museum struggles with its legacy across all fronts.

As an offshoot of the *Rhodes Must Fall* student movement (2015) that led to the removal of Cecil John Rhodes’ iconic statue at the University of Cape Town, *Shackville* students protested the lack of university housing. Students removed paintings from the walls of the university’s most elite resident halls, and publicly burnt the paintings because they saw them as signs of enduring white privilege. The action demonstrated the enormous gulf that continues to exist between the art world where art is revered and black students who see oil paintings as representing whiteness but who are also aware that its destruction has high emotive power. The burning of paintings at UCT in 2016 demonstrates how many of the same issues are still prevalent at universities and museums. Figure 57 shows a dramatic contrast to the sanitised, well-lit art museum. The enduring racial fractures in Cape Town got explosive exposure in the event. The way black

students protested against white domination by burning art demonstrates how they reject the white sanctity of art and use art to meet activist ends.



Figure 57: Ashleigh Furlong, *Shackville Protest burning art at UCT*. 2016.

Taken on the street, Figure 57 documents the *Shackville* protest of 2016. In this photograph framed paintings are piled on the ground, not in an exhibition space, and are being destroyed. In a tense event, the paintings were removed from the walls of UCT's most prestigious Upper Campus dining halls and burnt by protesting students. The collection of twenty-five paintings, mostly of white wardens and prominent academics, were set alight and the surrounding crowd gathered and watched or recorded the event on mobile phones.

On the top of the pile of paintings, however a painting is about to be burnt documenting protest action of the 1980's. It is by UCT's first black MA graduate in Fine Art, Keresemose Richard Baholo. Another of the burnt portraits was of anti-apartheid activist Molly Blackburn. If these paintings indeed depict whiteness then what does the destruction of work by a black artist or work of an anti-apartheid activist mean? Did the protestors not realise what they were burning? Did they fail to recognise the iconography of the paintings because they



lacked 'visual literacy' as Marilyn Martin (in Pienaar, 2016) stated, when she was interviewed about the protest action? The fact that students burnt these paintings means less that they couldn't 'read' the paintings but that they were alienated from their own history – and had a kind of political illiteracy.

The statement the protesting students were making is powerful. Their action asserted that the liberation movement has failed in South Africa. Militant action that goes to the heart of white culture made their voices heard. Surely the antithesis of an art exhibition is the destruction of art. But the painting burnings offer valuable lessons about white ownership of the art world. Although certain spaces have always been white and continue to be so, spaces of white privilege, of art and education have got to open up to multiple voices. A new generation will not continue to endure the pain of the past in silence. The action demonstrated fury about the disconnect from history and from the future black students feel. It is not about the pain of the past in the mellowed distance. It is not about the future as optimistic and removed. This is about pain that is pressed up and knotted. Pain that has rotted for almost thirty years. It is about promises unrealised and a future that looks bleak in the context of unresolved past pain. The past was present at the South African National Gallery with the new director's efforts to mount the expansive exhibition *Pierneef to Gugulective (1910-2010)*. Dealing with the past and with past practices at the museum reared its head at the South African National Gallery. Issues that exist in this thesis, of white ownership and black exclusion find prominence in the exhibition.

## **7.2 The exhibition *Pierneef to Gugulective (1910-2010)***

Hired in 2009, director Riason Naidoo opened his first exhibition 'Pierneef to Gugulective (1910-2010)' at the South African National Gallery in 2010. Naidoo was born in the Indian Group Area, Chatsworth, Durban and completed his MA in fine art at Wits. He curated numerous exhibitions, is also a practicing artist and has paintings and 'new media' in various South African art collections (Miller,

2010:10). Identifying as black, which speaks to his sympathy with black consciousness, Naidoo was on the outside of the art world which was still largely white at the beginning of his tenure. Coinciding with the Soccer World Cup which took place in South Africa in 2010, 'Pierneef to Gugulective (1910-2010)' intended to survey South African art over a hundred years but it also intended to portray South African art as more inclusive than before. The exhibition was therefore intended to be racially inclusive and nationally representative. By including Pretoria born landscape artist from the colonial era, Pierneef, and the contemporary art collective Gugulective from Gugulethu, Naidoo aimed to show a movement through time, from the colonial period to the postapartheid present. Naidoo also wanted to send out a message of inclusion. Assisted by one curator, Joe Dolby, Naidoo set himself a mammoth task to open a mega exhibition in just over two months. Reflecting on the exhibition Naidoo comments:

There had originally been some soccer exhibition scheduled for 2010 and I felt, as the national gallery, the premier art institution in the country, we should rather not be showing exhibitions coming from Germany on football, and you know, what is our strength? Our strength is our art, our history. That is how the idea around that exhibition came up, coinciding with the FIFA world cup, and expecting also a lot of visitors in the country. And in putting that exhibition together, there was a lot of resistance initially from the curators. And in the process of putting the exhibition together, I also saw it as a team building exercise, where it was never intended for me to be the curator of that show, I saw it was a collaborative effort but I had to take the lead on that and most of the curators eventually pulled their weight in putting that show together. (Naidoo, 2016)

Emptying the entire museum to make room for a new exhibition had never been attempted in the history of the museum. This was likely due to the conditions of the Bailey Collection which stipulated that the collection always be exhibited in whole or in part. This always has been prohibitive given the size of the museum (Tietze, 2011:165). Naidoo encountered resistance from the museum's white curators and criticism from vocal members of the public who opposed the removal of the collection for the duration of the exhibition.

It is understandable that Naidoo took issue with the Bailey Collection which could easily be considered the colonial heart of the collection. Donated in the 1940's, it was made up of 400 drawings, paintings and prints. The collection is composed of portraiture and sports paintings executed by British artists active between 1760 and 1920, with a small number of pieces also by Dutch and French painters (Tietze, 2011:165). The collection was donated by Abe Bailey, a mining magnate, financial speculator and close friend of Rhodes. It showed the leisure pursuits of the English landed gentry.

When I arrived there, the Bailey collection was up, which was this skewed representation of South African art. The Bailey collection had been up since 1946, we took it down for the first time when I, when we put up 'Pierneef to Gugulective'. There was a backlash about that, in the media and stuff like that. I had a meeting with the Bailey council members to take it down, and then after 'Pierneef to Gugulective' to not hang it as a collection, but to integrate it into the permanent collection. So now in the time when I was there, we chose a few examples to show with our permanent collection, but not to show it on its own. So for 64 years, it enjoyed exclusive, permanent exposure at the gallery, without being challenged. It took up space and prominence to the Bailey family etcetera, at the expense of South African art, and these are English artists. So there was that, there was also, oh, walking through the Bailey collection and all that on a daily basis, actually made me a little bit sick, so I said, actually, this is not what we need to be showing. And that's how, the idea for 'Pierneef to Gugulective' came about, what is our story in art? (Naidoo ,2016)

That the Bailey collection elicited such a visceral response from Naidoo is instructive. This response made him want to exhibit something dramatically different and make his mark on an institution that was so embedded in a colonial past. The idea of the new survey of South African art arose out of a response to the colonial collection. It is understandable that he chose to take it down and replace it with a new collection of work. Writing about the exhibition Naidoo explains:

The exhibition was (intended as) nationally representative, acknowledging artists beyond the Cape, recognising privileged racial access to art education and training opportunities, and highlighting different aesthetic value systems... As we know art does not exist in isolation so the intention was to simultaneously reflect on important moments as well as attitudes of different eras... There is no clear narrative of history. So, juxtapositions, multiple layers, narratives and visual connections are the threads of the exhibition. (Naidoo, 2010:51)

Recognising racial privilege especially with regard to art education is laudable and Naidoo's motivation sounds coherent. But can 'juxtapositions' serve as a unifying thread to an exhibition encompassing the entire museum? What were the audience's expectations of an exhibition of this scale?

For critics, discussed below, there was an expectation of a clear narrative. The idea of 'reading' an exhibition and the concomitant idea of an acquired 'visual literacy' suggest a particular set of prescribed tools needed to navigate an exhibition. This idea already excludes certain audiences and assumes that the museum experience is something generic and can be learned. But there are different ways of curating art exhibitions, different audiences and different kinds of museum experiences. Imposing only one kind of way to navigate and understand exhibitions is problematic for various reasons. It assumes something about the kind of audience and is especially problematic given South Africa's history of differentiation and exclusion. There was a clear division between supporters and detractors. While mostly academics/ art critics deride technical aspects such as a lack of a narrative and the lack of an accompanying exhibition catalogue to help make sense of the exhibition other writers applaud the 'feel' of the exhibition, a new voice and a new vision for the museum.

Critics claimed that not only was the exhibition carelessly conceptualised and poorly realised, but that it lacked coherence and might have been well served with explanatory wall text. Academic Gerhard Schoeman from the University of the Free State asked:

What is all this clutter then? Beyond disingenuous platitudes about insight into ‘the soul of the nation’. The idea of showcasing art from the ‘length and breadth of this country sounds like political sentimentalism, hubris and blatant opportunism... mass spectatorship remains central to it’s thinking: more is better. More art, more rent, more profit. If Naidoo really wanted to make an entrance, he could have done better with a more thoughtful and careful show. As it stands the show reminds me of a cobbled together student art exhibition. (Schoeman, 2010:57)

In an article entitled, ‘SANG’s reputation trashed for 2010 show’ critic Lloyd Pollak redoubled Schoeman’s scathing account of the exhibition:

Is there any method to this madness? My answer is no, for the show which occupies the entire SANG... provides an overpoweringly overloaded visual experience unredeemed by any sense of visual direction. One is overwhelmed by the sheer glut of works on display, and astounded that no intellectual perspective has been provided with which to view them. One can only lament that this opportunity to provide an enriching educational experience derailed into a mindless essay in confusion. (Pollak, 2010: 1)

Pollak’s reading assumes that images need a text to interpret them, it discounts and undermines the visceral response artwork elicits from viewers. It also assumes that past methods of interpreting art at the museum with textual guides worked and that Naidoo’s exhibition undermined past systems. If the past was well ordered and understandable the present is chaotic and confusing. Yet a visceral response to art based on feeling need not be overwhelming and confusing. It is a valid way of experiencing art and says more about the critic than the works displayed. There were also positive responses to the curatorial direction of the exhibition. Corrigan (2010) who wrote positively about the lack of a clear narrative thread, noted that this strategy allowed Naidoo to play up the various contradictory narratives. Furthermore, for Corrigan,

Most curators would balk at such a (large) task, particularly one that would have them make definitive statements about such a huge

period. Naidoo's solution is simply to side step framing his exhibition with any one overarching statement... it's an unexpected trajectory but Naidoo has inserted quite a number of surprises by insinuating contemporary artworks into historical periods and layering multiple narratives. In this way he is able to talk back to the past. (Corrigall, 2010:3)

Positive reviews, such as those by Glenn Ashton (2011) and Marianne Thamm (2010), also went beyond analysing the structure of the exhibition and responded more to the feelings evoked by the exhibition and the art on display. Ashton (2011) saw the exhibition as something more than the sum of its parts. The exhibition represented a symbol of hope and represented the art world opening up and of allowing different perspectives and new voices. Ashton also expressed the spiritual role of art but also noted its revolutionary role:

The fine arts in South Africa still awaits its revolution. Riason Naidoo has begun to ring the change. He and others need support. The repositioning of our art history will bring new perspective and will shape the future. Active intent towards creating ties to Africa and the long history of African art must be nurtured, not condescendingly curated by non-representative outsiders, as has been the case of Khoisan art. The time is up for self-referential Eurocentric worldviews. It is now time to collectively usher forth a broader, more populist and Afrocentric church of fine arts at which we can all worship, which we can call our own, with pride. (Ashton, 2011:13)

Marianne Thamm (2010) visited the exhibition with her two young daughters and it precipitated a discussion about the past and the history of the country. Thamm's article suggested that we, 'Look to art to find the truth of our hijacked history.' Instead of relying on current politicians who change history to serve their own ends, art is more reliable to tell the story of the past.

We had decided to visit the exhibition *From Pierneef to Gugulective: 1910-2010* at the Iziko South African National Gallery. It had been a spontaneous decision on my part. I have always found a sense of balance and tranquillity in museums and galleries and wanted to share

this feeling with my seven and five-year-old daughters... and while I have always felt and understood the capacity of art to confront, provoke and offend, I had forgotten its powerful ability to disrupt and offer a space for reflection. For how else do we tell our children about the past? Where does the opportunity – free of the demagoguery of politics- present itself... ‘Why mommy?’ I had to fashion a story collapsing around 300 years of history to explain how good people like Nelson Mandela or Bram Fischer sometimes ended up in jail, a place both my children know is for ‘baddies.’ And as I told the story, I wondered whether other South African parents were grappling with the same issues... When art goes against the politics of the time it serves the interests of history: if we are to look for a more objective lens then it is off to the galleries we must go. For the Butcher Boys are still amongst us. (Thamm, 2010:no pagination)

Thamm’s review shows how the exhibition speaks to the future and how it opened up new spaces for debate that might have been closed with a more formulaic exhibition. Children have traditionally been excluded as viewers of art exhibitions, instead special programs that are sometimes patronising, cater to their understanding of an exhibition. This is because it is commonly believed that they lack the requisite ‘visual literacy’ to understand an art show. As was seen with Thamm’s children, however, art is a potent catalyst for understanding our world and reality regardless of our age.

Thamm (2010), Ashton (2011) and Corrigan’s (2010) positive reviews offer a clearer understanding of the impact of the exhibition. Using academic apparatuses to dissect the exhibition only takes us so far and does not look at the impact on visitors. Art critics are an elite group and traditionally speak to themselves and try to replicate systems that serve to uphold the group to which they belong. The fact that a writer of colour in Cape Town thought that the exhibition had a profound meaning beyond the narrow white art world, that a mother felt that the exhibition opened up a dialogue between herself and her children, is more important than the fact that the exhibition failed to follow certain conventions. Responding to negative commentary in an interview in the *Guardian* newspaper,



Naidoo (2010) gives a clearer understanding of why there was such a negative backlash from certain sectors. According to Naidoo,

... the art world in South Africa is largely white, Cape Town is known to be quite colonial. So apart from being a new director, I'm the first black director in a museum where there have never been black curators. There is definitely resistance to change. (Naidoo in Smith, 2010: 3)

In a personal interview (2016) Naidoo corroborates the idea of negative criticism based on racial bigotry:

So in many ways the exhibition was about representation, so I didn't try to exclude white artists, I just included more and I included black narratives and I think when I arrived at the gallery there was a master narrative, which was a white narrative of art in this country. This was my sense, it was based on the narrative of western Modern art, that South Africa was trying to mirror. I think that was also how South Africans got their sense of worth, by comparing themselves with what was happening in Europe and in the west. For me, what was more interesting was to see how South African artists articulated their own experience here and how it was different to the west rather than how it was similar or instead of trying to emulate, this kind of personal particular experience. (Raison Naidoo, 2016)

Expanding on Naidoo's processes and his relationship with the museums' white curators is useful:

There was a lot of resistance initially from the curators... it was never intended for me to be the curator of that show... After the exhibition most of the staff were on board and ready to contribute, but that process took maybe about a year and a half after being director. On entering the gallery, I was met with a lot of resistance from the staff. (Naidoo, 2016)

Although the exhibition received a number of good reviews it is significant that negative reviews came from within the white art world, where Naidoo noted that there was a resistance to change. As can be seen in Naidoo's comments above, white curators at the museum were resistant to his appointment and actively

resisted collaborating with him. According to a comment I received, off the record, from one of the curators, their recalcitrance was because Naidoo lacked experience and because he ‘over sold’ himself at the beginning of his tenure. Perhaps this opposition does amount to racism but I think that it is about something equally nasty in the art field more generally. It is about meanness, a sense of ownership and of excluding an outsider. The museum annual reports show clearly that each and every one of the white curators came to the museum from other related fields. In South Africa, with a limited number of art museums, this is understandable. Naidoo had the prerequisite tertiary qualifications, but he was entirely outside the Cape Town white art world. White curators worked together to guard the knowledge they had gained over the years closely. The situation mirrors the kinds of exclusion that this thesis has examined. Exclusion was not an action based on race and racial prejudice alone. It was not only about countering authority that came from the outside. It was about acknowledging a field that is fundamentally subjective as a field based on white patronage. It was about working to expel the agency of someone from outside. It is based on the knotted legacy of the institution which is bound to racism and the history of racism in South Africa.

### **7.3 ‘Whiteness burning’ Shackville Protests (2016)**

Media in South Africa and world-wide met the 2016 burning of oil paintings by University of Cape Town (UCT) students with measures of paternalistic horror. The American-based *The Economist*’s article, ‘Student protests in South Africa: whiteness burning’, offered a brew of race, violence and anarchy: a determined disregard for public property, an affront to liberal ideas of the value of art, a demonstration to readers that Africa is ungovernable and backward, the black protesters immature, capricious and violent. Especially when it came to light that paintings by Baholo and a bust of the university’s first woman graduate, Maria Fuller, were also destroyed. However deplorable, this was not a simple act of vandalism. It manifests a fault line between public and hidden histories that

pervade the fabric of the city, an eruption against long entrenched associations of exclusion. The burning paintings illuminate a divide in the Cape Town art world and the country's divisions of race, class and gender. The incident echoes a long-standing contestation over art's colonial legacy at the city's South African National Gallery. The museum has deep ties to UCT, and its history shows the power of art to act as a purveyor of exclusion and sign of differentiation. Interviewing former director Marilyn Martin, Hans Pienaar (2016) wrote about the fate of the paintings left behind and he asked Martin for her views on the burning of the paintings.

This is the price we pay for living in a society that is visually illiterate. Unless you have attended a school or university and obtained a formal education, or you have empowered yourself by reading about art and looking at art, you are one of the millions- at all levels of society and across our complex demographics – of the visually illiterate. The 'great living leveller' we may call it. So the problem needs to be addressed at junior school, not only with regard to the visual arts, but with regard to all art. (Martin in Pienaar, 2016)

I agree that burning the paintings was wrong but I do not agree that it demonstrates visual illiteracy that can be 'rectified' through education. Educated Nazis burnt art to show contempt for the material they burnt, so Martin's view that only uneducated people burn art is patently false. Instead, burning paintings demonstrates that black students recognise oil paintings as a symbol of power and seeing these paintings in public spaces reminds them of the white legacy of the institution. Following the burnings and in order to deflect the situation, in May 2017, around 70 art works were removed from public spaces at UCT to storage or covered up for 'safekeeping' in line with UCT's 'custodial responsibilities' (Price, 2017). Belinda Bozzoli, MP for the Democratic Alliance, claimed that this amounted to censorship. Bozzoli stated that this act contravened the university's commitment to openness and tolerance. This is an excerpt from her letter to UCT Vice Chancellor Max Price:

I am writing this letter to you today in order to address a deeply concerning issue - the restriction being exercised on freedom of speech, so much a part of what UCT ostensibly stands for, materialised in the banning of approximately 75 artworks, which have been removed from public display or covered up in the past year. Tragically we also saw the burning of some 23 artworks in the unrest of 2016... it is extremely difficult to comprehend how one of our country's leading universities, known for its commitment to openness and free speech and obviously dedicated to the support and curation of the creations of many of South Africa's best artists, could have indulged in this kind of censorship. This current incursion on freedom of speech is akin to the censorship and banning of literature, film, theatre and art by the apartheid government. Signed Prof. Belinda Bozzoli MP for the Democratic Alliance. (Bozzoli, 2017)

Although Bozzoli's statement could be construed as political opportunism, artists who had their works removed permanently to storage agreed that UCT's actions amounted to censorship. Students also conceded that the procedure lacked clear public communication and that they were unaware of the time frame of the universities 'consultative process' (Pertsovsky, 2017). Currently the 'controversial' art has been permanently removed from public spaces. There is something tragic when an institution of learning has to censor its art to avoid its destruction. It speaks to the failure of dialogue and also does not bode well for the freedom of expression. What does it say about the fate of art more generally if it has to be permanently removed to accommodate dissenting views? Celebrated South African photographer, David Goldblatt has since revoked the gift of his photographs to UCT. The collection of 18 archival boxes of photographic prints, transparencies, negatives and digital items have instead been moved to Yale University in the United States. Goldblatt felt that artistic freedom and the right of the artist were no longer protected at UCT (Mufamadi, 2017:1-2).

The position of symbols of the past came to a head with the protest action that preceded the *Shackville* protest, *Rhodes Must Fall* (2015). As a cataclysmic protest, the *Rhodes Must Fall* movement protested against the deep colonial divides inherent at universities like UCT.

#### 7.4 Rhodes Must Fall (2015)



Figure 58: *Rhodes Must Fall* protest action, UCT, 2015.

Issues of agency and authority were succinctly at play in the *Rhodes Must Fall* protest action, proving that the legacy of the past and its manifestation in the present, are as controversial and troublesome as ever. It also shows that the idea of a unified South African identity is still a fractious and contested issue. Following on going protest action by students and staff, the statue of Cecil Rhodes, mining magnate, colonial jingoist and UCT benefactor, was unseated from its plinth in its pride of place in front of the Great Hall at UCT. The unseating of Rhodes had wider implications than erasing a prominent figure of the colonial past. According to organisers, it had to do with the lack of transformation of the academic and administrative staff, the inclusion of more ‘African’ content in the curricula and an end to the colonial arrogance of UCT’s institutional culture (Chapman, 2017:1).

In an article on the *Rhodes Must Fall* campaign, Michael Chapman (2017) contends that public statuary has always acted as visual markers of a regime. A glut of cruel military men was therefore memorialised in this way and public statuary’s function was to help legitimate a preferred and dominant national

narrative. Until twenty years ago this was predominantly white and male. Starting at the Cape Colony with Van Riebeeck, whose statue stands alongside his wife, Maria on the Foreshore in Cape Town, successive regimes implanted their heroes in public spaces.

A point of contention concerning the UCT Rhodes statue, is that while for many black students Rhodes was a reviled colonial figure, he was also a benefactor of the university. His despotic vision of Africa as a colony gave rise not only to the UCT but also to the prestigious Rhodes Mandela scholarship. This contradiction needs to be acknowledged. It is far more productive to engage with Rhodes' legacy than to simply remove its sign, but a sign carries potent symbolism and its efficacy cannot be ignored. UCT has started on a project to deal with its colonial legacy. A shadow of the original statue stretched out on the ground below the original plinth was painted black, as a gesture of remembrance. Furthermore, in 2016, an exhibition opened at UCT's Centre for African Studies (CAS) that included archival photographs capturing moments in the movement's history. It demonstrates the university's support of the students' sentiments. The exhibition included banners, audio-visual material and other related objects.

## 7.5 The Trans Collective



Figure 59: Members of The Trans Collective at the Centre for African Studies, UCT, 2016.

In an unusual turn of events ‘The Trans Collective’ stormed the exhibition opening,<sup>116</sup> claiming that they played a critical role in the *Rhodes Must Fall* movement but were excluded based on their gender. The collective stated that they were excluded because of dominant members in the movement’s ‘rigid loyalty to patriarchy’. Members walked through the crowd into the gallery to lie down naked carrying placards during the opening address by Professor Lungisile Ntsebeza. Patterned with red paint they wrote on the walls and over the photographs. Online video footage shows a ruckus developing between collective members and gallery staff. Reacting in horror, the curator asks if he needs to call the police as he sees red paint covering expanses of the yet to be opened exhibition. A collective member angrily shouts back at him saying ‘that’s all you white men do when confronted by us!’ (UCT trans collective storms *Rhodes Must Fall* gallery launch video, 2016)

<sup>116</sup> The protest action bears striking similarities to Femen protests around the world. The Paris based group, which originated in Ukraine, protests against sex tourism, religious institutions, sexism, homophobia and other local and international topics. Their slogans are painted on their skin and they often use shock tactics, drama and humour to convey their messages.





Figure 60: Ashraf Hendricks, 2016. *Paul Weinberg of the Centre for African Studies Gallery and Hejin Kim of the Trans Collective.*

Distinctive issues surround The Trans Collective's protest action. These issues demonstrate that structures of protest movements are fractious. Even groups with a common cause are heterogeneous. Protest action is attention grabbing, messy, violent and is sometimes distasteful but necessary. The fact that certain actions are perceived as distasteful holds a mirror up to society and to the things society holds in high regard. Curators understandably cringe when their neat well-designed spaces are desecrated. Museums and archives are a cornerstone of western higher education. Universities promulgate that there is continuity and order in the world, and with these things came reasonable debate which leads to deeper understanding. However, structures such as universities, museums and archives are self-referential and part of their function is to support the systems of society they are embedded within. Having this order destabilised through a performance of anger and destruction is deeply unsettling to those in power. It is easy to dismiss the actions of the protestors as an obtrusive, tasteless, destructive act. Disbelief and frustration are clearly visible on the face of the curator, Paul Weinberg in Figure 60. Weinberg was a founder member of anti-apartheid photography collective, Afrapix. Afrapix was a small multiracial group who produced some of the most compelling photographic statements on apartheid in

the 1980's. As Weinberg watches in disbelief, HeJin Kim of the collective paints on the glass of one of the photographs. How are interventionist strategies accommodated inside museums or galleries when it carries a destructive potential?

In an online official statement, CAS smoothed over the more uncomfortable aspects of the moment, and claimed that staff members 'engaged' with The Trans Collective to allow the space be used for its ultimate purpose: as a place of debate and a contestation of narratives (Official CAS Statement, 2016). They also stated that the purpose of the CAS and its gallery was to support the right of all people to express their views in the rethinking of issues and challenges in Higher Education in South Africa. The Trans Collective's manifesto demonstrates that the group has legitimate grievances concerning their exclusion and their stigmatisation by members of their peer group. They state that colonisation has shaped the understanding of gender and gender expression and that they are engaging with activism to claim their space in a globalised world, calling to be recognised and have their story heard. This protest action shows that the debate around monuments and public heritage is current, living, moving, and evolving. It shows that an exhibition marking the year anniversary of a protest action can itself become a platform for contestation and debate. The protest exposes the struggles of including incongruent voices to our collective story, voices that dominant groups would prefer to silence. The current heritage debate therefore proves that it encompasses more than including a diversity of people, but that it also includes the evolving definitions people ascribe to themselves. That this action took place within in the walls of an art gallery cannot be discounted. Gallery and museum spaces are especially suited to making protest actions especially objectionable. The binaries inherent in the space and of protest: of quiet/loud, clean/dirty, aesthetic/garish all allow the protest greater efficacy and the gallery space makes that possible.

Obtrusive student protest action is an easy target for detractors when a general sense of pessimism has descended over the country. Protest appears to laugh in the face of the more serious scourge of problems besetting the country. South Africans still have the very difficult task of rewriting and dismantling the mechanisms that made colonial rule successful and that keep us divided. The Rainbow Nation with idealistic shared goals of finding commonality despite our differences has long since disappeared. Protest action such as this stamps on the aches of failed idealism and political glibness. It demonstrates that we continue to bear the burden of a colonial past but that we now face new challenges regarding inclusivity.



Figure 61: Transform UCT grew out of the *Rhodes Must Fall* Movement (Monday Newspaper). 2016.

## 7.6 Conclusion

In the postcolonial context, both the university and art museum are sites of persistent white privilege in a divided city, with art acting as a compelling testament to a continued site of contestation. The art world in South Africa has had a fractious history. Processes of exclusion and erasure have played a part from the very beginning. The art world was always dominated by white voices. Public art museums, art schools and universities all reinforced this legacy. While the South African National Gallery under Naidoo struggled with internal conflicts and with collections that were tied to past legacies, more recent protests show that art is still a powerful tool for harnessing change. Younger black voices used art in action that is dissonant and destructive. These individuals are questioning the role of art as a marker of difference and are also questioning the hierarchies within protest action that excludes people based on gender. If anything, the volatile present shows that art has a future and that old definitions of art will not suffice as South Africa moves into the future. Art as a creative force, in its broadest possible sense is necessary and is being harnessed in these increasingly polarised times. Art is powerful and its power is not confined to the walls of museums. The South African National Gallery does however have an important role to play in the ongoing debate of ownership and agency. If anything, the debates, controversies and legacies the museum carries in its past offer an intriguing lens through which to examine the convoluted knots of our art world. More recent expressions of activism demonstrate that ever increasing voices demand to be recognised and refuse to be set apart.

## Bibliography

- Aboulela, L. 1997. The Museum. In: Aboulela, L. *Colored Lights*. Edinburgh: Polygon.
- Ainslie, B., Skotnes, C. & Verster, A. (eds.). 1979. *The State of Art in South Africa. Conference proceedings*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- Allen, E. 1950. Profile: John Paris. *The Cape Argus*. 11 March. no pagination.
- Amnesty International Report*. 26 June, 2003. Chile torture and the naval training ship the Esmeralda. AMR 22/006/2003.
- An Introduction - the South African anti apartheid Documentary Photography Collective in the 1980s*. 2016 [O]. Available: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/afrapix> [accessed: 5 September 2017].
- Annual reports of the National Department of Education and Culture in the 1980's*. Pretoria: Republic of South Africa.
- [s.n.]. 1947. The Art Critic, Too Many Long Faces in Art Galleries. *The Argus*. 19 June. no pagination.
- [s.n.]. 1949. The Art Critic, SA Art as Ambassador. *The Argus*. 3 November. no pagination.
- [s.n.]. 1951. Sweater girl of prehistoric times will fascinate National Gallery visitors. *The Argus*. 21 February. no pagination.
- Arnold, M. 2009. 1986-1999: Looking back at politics, art and young artists. In Crump, A., & Maurice, E. (eds.). *Standard Bank Young artists: 25: a retrospective exhibition*. Johannesburg: Standard Bank.
- Arnott, B. M. 1969. *Lippy Lipshitz. A Biographical Commentary and Documentation of the Years 1903-1968*. Cape Town: A. A. Balkema.
- Ashton, G. 2011. SA fine arts stuck in past. *Saturday dispatch*:13.
- Baderoon, G. 2011. Intimacy and history: The art of difference and identity in South Africa. In Goniwe, T., Majavu, M. & Pissarra, M. 2011. *Visual Century: South African Art in Context–Volume 4: 1990-2007*.

- Barben, M. 2015. *What does it mean to be a national gallery when the notions of nation transform radically?* Unpublished MA thesis, University of Cape Town.
- Barron, C. 2005. Raymund van Niekerk: Curator of the National Gallery. *Sunday Times*: 16.
- Beaubien, M.C. 1982. The Cultural Boycott of South Africa. *Africa Today*. 29(4): 5-16.
- Becker, H.S. 1982. *Art worlds*. California. University of California Press.
- Bedford, E. 1993. *Ezakwantu: Beadwork from the Eastern Cape*. Exhibition Catalogue. Cape Town: South African National Gallery.
- Beezy Bailey website. 1998. [O]. Available: <http://home.intekom.com/beezybailey/new/joyce.htm> [accessed: 20 July 2017].
- Bell-Scott, P., Hull, A. G. & Smith, B. 1982. *All the women are White, all the Blacks are men, but some of us are brave: Black women's studies*. New York: Feminist Press.
- Berman, E. 1983. *Art and Artists of South Africa: An Illustrated Biographical Dictionary and Historical Survey of Painters, Sculptors and Graphic Artists since 1875*. Halfway House: Southern Book Publishers.
- Bhambra, G.K. 2014. Postcolonial and decolonial dialogues. *Postcolonial Studies*, 17(2):115-121.
- Bickford-Smith, V., van Heyningen, E. & Worden, N. 1998. *Cape Town: The Making of a City*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Bickford-Smith, V., van Heyningen, E. & Worden, N. 1999. *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century: An Illustrated Social Guide*. Cape Town: New Africa Books.
- Birkin, J. (dir.). 1994. Back to school Mr Bean. (Television program). Tiger Aspect Productions.
- Bokhurst, M. 1952. Forward in: *Exhibition of Contemporary South African Art*. Cape Town: South African Association of Arts.
- Bourdieu, P. 1993. *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature*. Columbia University Press.

- Bozzoli, B. 2017. *UCT must immediately unban artworks*. [O]. Available: <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/uct-must-immediately-unban-artworks--belinda-bozzo> [accessed: 6 September 2017].
- Bredenkamp, J., Goodnow, K.J., & Lohman, J. 2006. *Challenge and transformation: museums in Cape Town and Sydney* (Vol. 1). New York: Berghahn Books.
- [s.n.]. 1900. The New Art Gallery. *Cape Monthly Magazine*: 366.
- [s.n.]. 1930. South Africa's Royal Academy. The New Art Gallery to Be Opened on Monday. *Cape Times* .1 November. no pagination.
- [s.n.]. 1940. Prof. Roworth Attacks Modern Art. Work of Michaelis Praised. *Cape Times*. 25 September.
- [s.n.]. 1950. £15 000 scheme for S.A art: wider scope for National Gallery. *Cape Times*. 5 December. no pagination.
- [s.n.]. 1957. Cultural apartheid introduced: Waterson on 'injustice and hardship'. *Cape Times*. 19 March: 17.
- [s.n.]. 1910. *The Cape Town Guide*. The South African Art Gallery. [s.n.].
- Carew, D. Conceptual husband fetches R52 000. *Weekend Argus*. 7 December 2002: 26.
- Carman, J. 2011. Art museums and national identity, in J Carman (ed.). *Visual century: South African art in context*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press. 21-41.
- Chapman, M. 2017. *The Academic Article in an Age of Mechanical Production, or Reproduction*. *Current Writing*. 28(1): 1-14.
- Clarke, C. 2010. But Some of Us Are Brave and the transformation of the academy: transformation?. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 35(4):779-788.
- Clifford, J. 1997. *Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.



- Coetzee, J.M. 1990. Censorship in South Africa. *English in Africa*. 17 ( 1):1-20.
- Cook, S. 2009. *Redress: Debates informing exhibitions and acquisitions in selected South African public art galleries (1990-1994)*. Unpublished Masters Thesis. Rhodes University.
- Coombes, A.E. 2003. *History after apartheid: Visual culture and public memory in a democratic South Africa*. Duke University Press.
- Corrigall, M. 2010. A conditional history. *The Independent* :5.
- Crampton, A. 2003. The Art of Nation Building: (Re)presenting Political Transition at the South African National Gallery. *Cultural Geographies*. 10:218–242.
- Dangor, A. 1998. *Apartheid and the death of South African cities*. Blank, *Architecture, apartheid*. Rotterdam: Nai Publishers.
- Davids, J. 1974. *Searching for words*. Cape Town: David Phillip.
- Davison, P. 1998. Museums and the Reshaping of Memory, in Nuttal, S. & Carli Coetzee, C. (eds.). *Negotiating the Past. The Making of Memory in South Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- De Klerk, F.W. 1989. Address by the Minister of National Education on the occasion of the establishment of the Foundation for the Creative Arts. *South African Arts Calendar*. 14(1):4.
- De Kok, I. 1996. Cracked Heirlooms: Memory on Exhibition. In Nuttall, S & Coetzee, C. (eds.) *Negotiating the past: the making of memory in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. 57-71.
- De Smit, A. 1871. An Art Gallery for South Africa. *Cape Monthly Magazine*. [no pagination].
- Del Guadalupe Davidson, M. & Yancy, G. 2009. *Critical perspectives on bell hooks*. New York: Routledge.
- Delpont, P. Museum or place for working with memory? In: Rassool, C. & Prosalendis, S. (eds) 2001. *Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating the District Six Museum*. Cape Town: District Six Museum:31-46.
- Department National Education Annual Report*. 1979-1980. Pretoria: The Government Printer.

- Dibley, B. 2005. The museum's redemption: contact zones, government and the limits of reform. *International journal of cultural studies*. 8(1): 5-27.
- Dolby, J. 1981. A Short History of the South African National Gallery. *The Lantern*: 37-49.
- Dorfman, A. and Vale, M. 1982. The Chilean State Today and the Intellectual: Reflections on Some Urgent Problems. *International Journal of Politics*. 12(4):69-87.
- Driver, D. 1981. Conference on Censorship. *English in Africa*. 8(1):no pagination.
- Dyer, R. 1997. *White*. London: Routledge.
- Dubow, S. 2006. *A Commonwealth of knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa 1820-2000*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dubow, S. 2011. South Africa and South Africans: nationality, belonging, citizenship. chapter in: *The Cambridge history of South Africa. Volume 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press:17-65.
- Dubow, S. 2014. *Apartheid, 1948-1994*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Duncan, C. 1995. *Civilizing Rituals. Inside Public Art Museums*. London: Routledge.
- Edmunds, P. 2003. *Bruce Gordon at the SANG*. [O]. Available: <https://artthrob.co.za/03apr/reviews/sang.html> [accessed: 10 September 2017].
- Ensalaco, M. 1994. Truth commissions for Chile and El Salvador: A report and assessment. *Hum. Rts. Q.* 16:656.
- Enwezor, O. 1999. Reframing the black subject: Ideology and fantasy in contemporary South African representation, in O. Oguibe & E. Enwezor (eds.). *Reading the contemporary: African Art from theory to marketplace*. London: Institute of International Visual Arts:377-399.
- Fairbairn, J. 1910. The South African Art Gallery. *The State*. 4(3):550-559.
- Fanon, F. 1952. *Black skin, white masks*. New York: [s.n.].
- Garuba, H. 2016. *Postcolonial theory*. Lecture notes for NIHSS regional workshop. 12 August. University of Cape Town.

- Gonzalez, S.A. & Keller, C. 2009. *Thami Mnyele + Medu Art Ensemble Retrospective*. Johannesburg: Jacana Media.
- Hall, S. 1990. Cultural identity and diaspora in: Rutherford, J. *Identity. Community, culture, difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart: 222-237.
- Hall, S. 1992. The question of cultural identity in: Hall, S. Held, D. & McGrew, A.G. *Modernity and its futures*. Cambridge: Polity: 274-316.
- Hayes, P. 2007. Power, secrecy, proximity: A short history of South African photography. Cape Town: *Kronos*.
- Hill, S. 2005. Icon Autopsy: Postmortem Portraits of Bantu Stephen Biko. *African Arts*. 38(3):16.
- Hinz, B. 1995. Degenerate and Authentic. Aspects of Art and Power in the Third Reich. in Ades, D. (ed.). *Art and Power. Europe under the Dictators 1930-1945*. London: SBC Hayward Gallery: 331.
- Honikman, A. H. 1958. Colour Chart Illustrating Policy of the South African National Gallery. Cape Town: The Trustees of The South African National Gallery.
- hooks, b. 1994. *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. London: Routledge.
- hooks, b. 2009. *Belonging: A culture of place*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, b. 2015. *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. New York: Routledge.
- Hopkins, K. 2003. The case against Botha. *Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa*. 36(3): 289 – 307.
- Irvine, M. 2011, *Introducing visual culture: Ways at looking at all things visual* [Online]. Available: <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/visualarts/Intro-VisualCulture.html> [accessed: 07 August 2016].
- Jacobs, S. 2001. Making sense of the 'coloured' vote in post-apartheid South Africa: Comparing the 1994 and 1999 provincial results in the Western Cape. *Journal of African Elections*. 1(1):23-35.
- Jarrett, G.A. 2005. The Black arts movement and its scholars. *American Quarterly*. 57(4): 1243-1251.

- Jarrett, J. 1975. *The Otis Story of Otis Art Institute since 1918*. Los Angeles: Alumni Association of Otis Art Institute.
- Jarrett, J. 1996. Create space: The experience of Black women in British art schools. In Delia Jarrett-Macauley (ed.), *Reconstructing Womanhood, Reconstructing Feminism: Writings on Black Women*. New York: Routledge:121.
- Jeppie, S. 1998. *Interiors, District Six, c. 1950. Architecture, Apartheid and After*. Rotterdam: Netherlands Architectural Institute.
- Jeppie, S. & Soudien, C. (eds.). 1990. *The struggle for District Six: Past and Present*. Cape Town: Buchu Books.
- Jones, C. 1994. *Art and investment: A study on how investment in art affects the contemporary artist in South Africa*. Unpublished MA thesis: Rhodes University.
- Kaufmann, C. 2005. Transforming our public art collections: preventative conservation in an African context. *SAMAB Bulletin*. 31:15-16.
- Kaufmann, C. 2016. *Interview at the South African National Gallery*. Interview by author. [transcript]. 13 December. Cape Town.
- Keegan, T. 1996. *Colonial South Africa and the origins of the racial order*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Kgalane, G.V. 1996. *Black South African Women's poetry (1970-1991)*. Unpublished MA thesis: Rand Afrikaans University.
- Kolbe, V. Museum beginnings. In: Prosalendis, S. & Rassool, C.(eds.) 2001. *Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating the District Six Museum*. Cape Town: District Six Museum Foundation.
- Kukard, J. 1993. *A Critical History of the New Group*. Unpublished M. A. thesis. University of Cape Town.
- La Guma, A. 1968. *A walk in the night: and other stories*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Larlham, D. 2007. Transforming geographies and reconfigures spaces: South Africa's National Arts Festival. *TDR/The Drama Review*. 51(3):182-188.

- Lazarus, N. (ed.). 2004. *The Cambridge companion to postcolonial literary studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, P. 2013. *Dead woman's skull leads to racism-in-science project*. Issue: 269 [O]. Available: <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20130426100245191> [accessed: 18 July 2017].
- Leibhammer, N. 1995. Book Review: Ezakwantu: Beadwork from the Eastern Cape. *African Arts*. 28: 81-82.
- Lewsen, P. 1983. *Olive Schreiner's Political Theories and Pamphlets*. Johannesburg: McGraw-Hill.
- Lilla, Q. 2017. Classical impressions, modernist inspirations: shaping a field of contention at the South African National Gallery (1895-1947). In: Troelenberg, E., & Savivo, M. (eds.). 2017. *Images of the art museum: connecting gaze and discourse in the history of museology*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Lindop, B. 2009. Art and Revolution: The life and death of Thami Mnyele, Wylie, D: book review. *De Arte*. 79: 57-60.
- Lipshitz, L. 1940. A Considered Reply to Prof. Roworth. *Trek*. 7 November: 20-24.
- Lodge, T. Resistance and reform, 1973-1994. In: Ross, R., Mager, A., & Nasson, B. (eds.). 2011. *Cambridge History of South Africa Volume 2: 1885-1994*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lorde, A. 1995. *The black unicorn: Poems*. New York: WW Norton & Company.
- Makhubu, N. 2013. Ephemeral democracies: interrogating commonality in South Africa. *Third Text*. 27(3): 415-418.
- Marks, L. U. 2000. *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Martin, M. 1985. Die Sewende Kunsbiennale in Valparaiso: 1985. *South African Arts Calendar*. 10(2): no pagination.
- Martin, M. 1986. El Rostro de Chile Exhibition: Pretoria Art Museum: January-February 1985. *Unisa Latin America report*. 2(2): 63-65.

- Martin, M. 1986. The Seventh International Biennial of Art, Valparaiso, Chile. *Unisa Latin America report*. 2(1):55-56.
- Martin, M. 1988a. Editorial in: *South African Arts Calendar*. 13(2):3.
- Martin, M. 1988b. Meer geld nodig vir kuns. *South African Arts Calendar*. 13(1):19-20.
- Martin, M. 1989. Die Stigting vir die skeppende kunste. *South African Arts Calendar*. 14(1):no pagination.
- Martin, M. 1991. The visual arts and patronage. *South African arts calendar*:11-26.
- Martin, M. 1993. Forward in: Bedford, E. *Ezакwantu: Beadwork from the Eastern Cape*. Exhibition Catalogue. Cape Town: South African National Gallery: 3-7.
- Martin, M. 1996a. Director's message. *Bonani newsletter*. Cape Town: South African national gallery.
- Martin, M. 1996b. The Rainbow Nation: identity and transformation. *Oxford art journal*. 19(1):3-5.
- Martin, M. 1997. Forward in: E. Bedford, (ed.). *Contemporary South African art, 85-95, from the South African National Gallery permanent collection*. Cape Town: South African National Gallery: 16-25.
- Martin, M. 2004. SANG: the horn of the national art museums dilemma post 1994 South Africa. *SAMAB*. 30:9-11.
- Maurice, E. 1988. Local is lekker: community art. *South African arts calendar*. 13(1): 28-29.
- McGee, J & Voyiya, V. (dirs.). 2003. *The luggage is still labelled: blackness in South African art*. (Documentary).
- Mdluli, S. 2015. *From the State of Emergency to the dawn of democracy: Revisiting exhibitions of South African art held in South Africa (1984-1997)*. Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of the Witswatersrand.
- Meldrum, A. 2006. Anton Rupert: South African tobacco tycoon who promoted equal rights during apartheid era. *The Guardian*. 23 January. [O]. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/jan/23/guardianobituaries.smoking> [accessed: 2 May 2017].

- Merrington, P. 1995. Pageantry and primitivism: Dorothea Fairbridge and the 'aesthetics of union'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 21(4):643–657.
- Merrington, P. 2001. A Staggered Orientalism. The Cape to Cairo Imaginary. *Poetics Today*. 22:323–365.
- Metcalf, T. R. 1980. Architecture and Empire. *History Today*. 30(12):7–12.
- Mignolo, W. D. 2007. Delinking. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3): 449–514.
- Mignolo, W., 2013. Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: On (de)coloniality, border thinking, and epistemic disobedience. *Confero: Essays on Education, Philosophy and Politics*. 1(1):129–150.
- Mignolo, W.D. 2000. *Local histories global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges and border thinking*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Miller, A. 1978. *Death of a salesman*. Middlesex: Penguin.
- Miller, S. 2010. Is it an ism or is it art? *SouthAfricanTimes.co.uk* :8–10.
- Minkley, G., Rassool, C. & Witz, L. 2017. *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- Minnaar, M. 2010. Its our art, warts and all. *The Sunday Times*:12.
- Mngxitama, A. 2009. *Andile Mngxitama on Thami Mnyele and Medu Arts Ensemble Retrospective and Johannesburg Art Gallery* [O] Available: [www.deadrevolutionariesclub.co.za](http://www.deadrevolutionariesclub.co.za) [accessed: 1 May 2017].
- [s.n.]. 1947. Cecil James Sibbett. *The Monitor*. 17 January: 18.
- Morrison, T. 2015, No place for self-pity, no room for fear: In times of dread, artists must never choose to remain silent. [Online] Available: <https://www.thenation.com/article/no-place-self-pity-no-room-fear> [accessed: 07 August 2017].
- Mufamadi, A. 2017. *UCT statement on The David Goldblatt Collection* [O] Available: [https://www.uct.ac.za/usr/press/2017/2017-02-24\\_Statement\\_GoldblattCollection\\_AM.pdf](https://www.uct.ac.za/usr/press/2017/2017-02-24_Statement_GoldblattCollection_AM.pdf) [accessed: 5 September 2017].
- Murinik, T. 1999. 'Colour Me: Berni Searle' in *Towards-Transit: New Visual Languages in South Africa*. (exhibition catalogue). Zurich and Cape Town: Pro Helvetia.



- Murray, N. & Witz, L. 2014. *Hostels, Homes, Museum: Memorialising migrant pasts in Lwandle, South Africa*. Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Naidoo, R. 2010. The making of Pierneef to Gugulective 1910-2010. *Design Art*:38-52.
- Naidoo, R. 2016. *Interview at Michaelis art school*. 4 December. Interview by author. [transcript]. 9 December. Cape Town.
- Nead, L. 1992. *The Female Nude: Art, Sexuality and Obscenity*. London: Routledge.
- Nettleton, A. 2003. *Art historians*. [O]. Available: <http://www.artthrob.co.za/03oct/feedback.html> [accessed: 29 July 2017].
- Nettleton, A. 2006. Shaking off the Shackles: From Apartheid to African Renaissance in Art History Syllabi, in Onians, J. (ed.). *Compression vs Expression: Containing and explaining the world's art*: 39-53.
- O'Connell, S. 2012. *Tonal Landscapes: Remembering the interiority of lives of apartheid through the family album of the oppressed*. Doctoral dissertation: University of Cape Town.
- Official CAS Statement: Protest action at RMF Exhibition Opening*. 2016. [O]. Available: [http://www.africanstudies.uct.ac.za/cas/events/2016/official\\_statement\\_rmf\\_exhibition](http://www.africanstudies.uct.ac.za/cas/events/2016/official_statement_rmf_exhibition) [accessed: 2 September 2017].
- Paris, J. 1953. Mr Paris explains his policy. *Cape Times*. 20 April:no pagination.
- Paris, J. 1961. Proud city possession needs aid: SA Gallery's Great Work over 13 years. *Cape Times*. 12 January:no pagination.
- Paris, J. 1962. SA Gallery's great work over 13 years. *Cape Times* .1 December:no pagination.
- Parliament of South Africa 1947. Parliament of South Africa*. Hansard. 29 April: col 3505. Cape Town: Government Printer.
- Patterson, S. 1953. *Colour and culture in South Africa*. London: Routledges and Paul.
- Peffer, J. 2009. *Art and the End of Apartheid (Vol. 2)*. Minnesota. University of Minnesota Press.

- Peires, J.B. 1987. The central beliefs of the Xhosa cattle-killing. *Journal of African History*. (28):43-63.
- Pertsovsky, N. 2017. *This is probably the list of artworks UCT has removed*. [O]. Available: <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/probably-list-artworks-uct-has-removed/> [accessed: 6 September 2017].
- Pienaar, H. 2016. *The removal of art at UCT: Marilyn Martin's response*. [O]. Available: <http://www.litnet.co.za/the-removal-of-art-at-uct-marilyn-martins-response/> [accessed: 10 September 2017].
- Pissarra, M., 2004. The Luggage is Still Labelled: But is it Going to the Right Destination?. *Third Text*. 18(2):183-191.
- Pollak, L. 2010. SANG's reputation trashed for 2010 show. *The South African Art Times*:1.
- Posel, D. 1991. *The making of apartheid 1948-1961*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Posel, D. 2011. The apartheid project, 1948-1970. In: Ross, R., Mager, A. & Nasson, B. 2011. *The Cambridge History of South Africa Volume 2: 1885-1994*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Powell, I. & Richards, C. 1989. Storm over the Springbok artists. *The Weekly Mail* :27-28.
- Price, M. 2017. *Text of letter from Dr Max Price, University of Cape Town Vice Chancellor, to Belinda Bozzoli MP, DA Shadow Minister of Education, 5 May 2017*. [O] Available: <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/no-artworks-have-been-banned--max-price> [accessed: 5 September 2017].
- Prosalendis, S. & Rassool, C. (eds.). 2001. *Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating the District Six Museum*. Cape Town: District Six Museum Foundation.
- Ramaswamy, S. 2014. The work of vision in the age of European Empires in Jay, M. & Ramaswamy, S. (eds.). *Empires of vision: A Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press: 1-22.
- Rassool, C. & Prosalendis, S. (eds.). 2001. *Recalling community in Cape Town: creating and curating the District Six Museum*. Cape Town. District Six Museum.

- Rassool, C. & Smith, T. History in photographs and the District Six Museum. In: Prosalendis, S. & Rassool, C.(eds.) 2001. *Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating the District Six Museum*. Cape Town: District Six Museum Foundation.
- Rettig Report*. 1991. The National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation Report.
- [s.n.]2000. *Returning the Gaze exhibition catalogue. Public Arts Project at the Cape Town One City Festival*. Johannesburg: Pro Helvetia.
- Richards, C. 1987. Feeding the Hand that Bites: South African Art & the Valparaiso Biennial of 1987. In *Africa South Art Initiative [ASAI]*. [O] Available: <http://asai.co.za/feeding-the-hand-that-bites-south-african-art-and-the-valparaiso-biennial-of-1987/> [accessed: 2 September 2017].
- Richards, C. 1991. About face: aspects of art history and identity in South African visual culture. *Third text*. 5(16-17):101-134.
- Robins, S. 2013. *When Science turns monstrous*. [O].Available: <http://www.sapressonline.com/allenzimbler/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Cape-Times-05-May-13.When-science-turns-monstrous.htm> [accessed: 18 July 2017].
- Ronge, B. 1988. Sponsors: Driving art into a dead end. *Sunday Times*. 31 July. no pagination.
- Roworth, E. 1910. The South African Art Gallery. *Cape Times Annual*: 8-9.
- Roworth, E. 1946. Student Days in England. *The Monitor*. 8 November: 12.
- Said, E. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.
- Schoeman, G. 2010. Collected works. *Arts South Africa*:57.
- [s.n.]. 1958. *Select and summary guide to the permanent collection excluding prints and drawings*. First impression. Cape Town: National Gallery of South Africa.
- Shepherd, N. 2015. *The mirror in the ground: Archaeology, photography and the making of a disciplinary archive*. Jeppestown: Jonathan Ball.
- Sibbett, C. J. 1947. Against the Cult of the Ugly. *Cape Times*. 27 September: no pagination.

- Smith, D. 2010. Gallery director defends decision to swap Gainsborough for African works. *The Guardian*: no pagination.
- Smith, G. 2014. A second anthology by Kathy Lette. In: Jones, B. (ed.). *The bumper book of reviews*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press: 13-14.
- Smith, T. and Rassool, C. 2001. *History in photographs at the District Six Museum. Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating the District Six Museum*.
- [s.n.]. 1983. The new constitution. *South African Arts Calendar*: 10(2):3.
- [s.n.]. 1987. Marilyn Martin Curriculum Vitae. *South African Arts Calendar*. 12(3):3.
- [s.n.]. Invitation to International Biennial, 1987, *South African Arts Calendar*. 12(2):1-3.
- South African National Gallery Annual Report 1948/1949. Cape Town.
- South African National Gallery Annual Report 1951/52. Cape Town.
- South African National Gallery Annual Report 1959/1960. Cape Town.
- South African National Gallery Annual Report 1959/60. Cape Town.
- South African National Gallery Annual Report 1975/1976. Cape Town.
- South African National Gallery Annual Report 1980/1981. Cape Town.
- South African National Gallery Annual Report 1994/1995. Cape Town.
- South African National Gallery Annual Report, 1988/1989. Cape Town.
- South African National Library Annual Report 1946/1947. Cape Town.
- Spillers, H. 2009. Views of the East Wing: On Michelle Obama. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 6(3) .307-310.
- Spivak, G. C. 1988. Can the subaltern speak? in Grossberg, L. & Nelson, C. (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (eds.). Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 271-313.

- Stent, T. 2000. In: Smith, C. *Returning the gaze exhibition catalogue*. Cape Town: Prohelvetia.
- Stratford Report* [s.n.]. 1947. Union of South Africa, Report of the Commission appointed in connection with the S. A. Art Gallery Cape Town. *Stratford Report*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- [s.n.]. 1948. SA art exhibition opened: silent ambassador for goodwill and better understanding- DF Malan. *The Sunday Times*. 3 October. No pagination.
- Taylor, L. 1993. *Human rights in the process of redemocratisation: Chile's Rettig report (No. 55)*. Glasgow: University of Glasgow.
- Thamm, M. 2010. Look to art to find the truth of our hijacked history. *The Sunday Times*: no pagination.
- Thomas, K. 2014a. *Impossible mourning: HIV/AIDS and visibility after apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Thomas, K. 2014b. Photography and the future in Jansje Wissema's Images of District Six. *Safundi: The Journal of South African and South American Studies*. 15 (2-3):283-305.
- Tietze, A. 1998. Classical Casts and Colonial Galleries. The Life and Afterlife of the 1908 Beit Gift to the National Gallery of Cape Town. *South African Historical Journal*. 39:70-90.
- Tietze, A. 2001. *The Sir Abe Bailey Bequest: A reappraisal, Exhibition catalogue*. Cape Town: Iziko Museums of Cape Town.
- Tietze, A. 2011. Artistically or historically important? The reception of the Abe Bailey sporting art collection in South Africa. *Journal of the History of Collections*. 23(1): 165-177.
- Tietze, A. 2017. *A history of the Iziko South African National Gallery: Reflections on art and national identity*. Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report. 1998.2:148-150.
- UCT trans collective storms Rhodes Must Fall gallery launch*. 2016. [O]. Available: <http://ewn.co.za/2016/03/10/UCT-Trans-Collective-storms-Rhodes-Must-Fall-gallery-launch> [2 September 2017].

- Van Niekerk, R. 1979. Administration of the visual arts in South Africa. In: *The State of Art in South Africa Conference Proceedings*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- Van Vuuren, C. J. 2001. Exhibiting the Ndebele: Myths, Stereotypes and Identity. *SAMAB*. 25(2): 87-93.
- Williamson, S. 1989. *Resistance art in South Africa*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Worden, N. 1994. *The Making of Modern South Africa*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Worden, N. 1998. *A Concise Dictionary of South African History*. Cape Town: Francolin.
- Wylie, D. 2004. Making Art in a Time of Struggle. *African Arts*. 37(4):56-61.
- Wylie, D. 2008. *Art and Revolution: The life and death of Thami Mnyele*. Virginia: University of Virginia Press.
- Yoshiara, Y. 2008. Art museums and society after apartheid. *Museum Management and Curatorship*. 23(3):281-293.
- Yoshiara, Y. 2007. *Art museums in a diverse society: a visitor study at the South African National Gallery*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. London: University of London.
- Younge, G. 1979. Dead in one's own lifetime: The contours of art under apartheid. in *Conference proceedings in The State of Art in South Africa*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.